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Róža Norström

The Coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict by the Polish Media (2014-2015)

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In this book, the author examines the media coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict by six Polish media outlets in 2014 and 2015. Using content analysis and in-depth interviews, the author explores how cultural and historical factors, as well as the national security threat to Poland, affected the media image of the conflict. Despite differences in editorial line, level of political parallelism and type of medium, the Polish media largely spoke with one voice. Interviews with journalists uncover how they view their role in reporting on the conflict, and how national prejudices had an impact on their work. The military and economic threat to Poland, resulting from Russia's actions, was the dominant tool of domestication used by the media to bring the dispute closer to the public.

The book is an important contribution to the research field and offers another example of how war- and conflict journalism usually is domesticated by journalist who choose nationalism before professionalism.

Professor Rune Ottosen, Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway

This book provides a wealth of information in its comprehensive look at how the news media in a neighboring country (Poland) covered the Russian-Ukrainian conflict across 13 months. The book is an important contribution in the area of political communication by detailing the "Domestication" of the conflict, in which the media emphasized the local context regarding the negative economic and military consequences on Polish society.

Professor Wayne Wanta, University of Florida, USA

The Author

Róża Norström, PhD, has participated in several Polish and international research projects, such as "Ukraine 2014 - media war and the war in media". She is the author of a number of articles and chapters in the subject of media and communication and political science.



UNIVERSITY OF SILESIA
IN KATOWICE

The Coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict by the Polish Media (2014-2015)

STUDIES IN COMMUNICATION AND POLITICS

Edited by Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska and Michał Głowacki

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Róža Norström

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Introduction

This book is dedicated to the coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict by traditional Polish media outlets in 2014 and 2015, and presents the results of my doctoral dissertation. I wanted to study how the selected media and journalists presented and domesticated the events in Ukraine, and also how the parties to the conflict were described. Although the presentation of external wars and armed conflicts by the covering state should be neutral, the scientific literature shows that this is not always the case and that many different factors influence it (see Zelizer and Allan, 2002; Shoemaker and Cohen, 2006). Context-oriented factors, that is those referring to the relationship between the covering and the covered state, as well as event-oriented factors, which are determined by the specific nature of the event, should be taken into account. It seems that both groups of factors might have affected how the Russian-Ukrainian conflict was perceived by Polish journalists. The proximity of the dispute and Poland's ambiguous relations with Ukraine and Russia, as well as the hybrid nature of the event, seem like important things to consider. Context-oriented factors can determine if the recipients will consider a news story as important and relevant to them – whether it is seen as “ours” or “their” event.

The role of the media when covering military actions has been quite widely dealt with in the scientific literature (see Eskjaer et al., 2015; Knightley, 2003). How to define what “coverage” means seems clear, but it is strongly dependent on the nature of the event it concerns. It is associated with how events and entities are presented, as well as how much attention the media pays to specific issues, which indicates their news value. This definition will be used for the purposes of my research. One should take into account the fact that wars and armed conflicts are mainly international events (see Cottle, 2009; Ross, 2007), therefore they are covered differently than national issues. Furthermore, the intense, brutal and generally negative character of the phenomenon (see Świąż, 2007; Chang et al., 1987) may make it harder for journalists to stay impartial (Russ-Mohl, 2013).

How the national media system functions, and the influence of the external environment on it (see Dobek-Ostrowska, 2007; McQuail, 2000; Pokorna-Ignatowicz, 2013), is of considerable importance in the case of the media's coverage. The Polish media system, according to Mancini (2015) and Dobek-Ostrowska (2012), is characterized by hybridity, which puts it close to both the polarized pluralist model and to the liberal model. The way Polish journalists approach a given issue can be influenced by market logic and the political

parallelism of media outlets, which will be reflected in the news stories they present.

An important factor is also how the event is defined. In this book I will refer to it as the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. The dispute in Ukraine is sometimes described as a hybrid war, due to its military and informational nature (Pacek, 2018). But in my study the term “conflict” will be used, as it covers more than only military warfare (see Brown and Stewart, 2015; Bierzanek, 1968). The conflict is also defined as an inter-state dispute. Baluk and Doroszko (2017), Bebler (2014) and Riabchuk (2016) are some of the scholars that have used this definition and called it the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

The aim of the study is to describe how the Russian-Ukrainian conflict was covered by the Polish media in 2014 and 2015 and to conclude if the fear of it spreading to Poland, as well as historical and cultural patterns, influenced the coverage. The purpose of the study is also to check if the crisis in Ukraine was domesticated by the Polish media. This seems to be interesting, especially due to the proximity of the conflict. Both newspapers and television programs will be analyzed to see if the Polish media spoke with one voice during the coverage of the conflict in Ukraine. Another possibility would be that differences resulting from the medium’s editorial line, the type of media, and the degree of relations with political actors affected the perspective of the dispute visible in the materials. This study will go a long way in explaining the importance of this conflict to the Polish media and society. That is to say, how much space and attention the media paid to the war in Ukraine. This event had a direct impact on the military and economic security of Poland. Therefore it seems to be important to check what kind of perspective – pro-Ukrainian or pro-Russian – was shown in the analyzed materials. It should be noted that Poland’s political and historical relations with the parties to the conflict are ambiguous. It can therefore be expected that the perception of the actors that are involved in the conflict by the Polish media will be marked by these patterns.

References to both Polish and foreign scientific publications are included in the study. When writing about the role of the media in armed conflicts, I refer to Rodgers (2012), Tumber (2004), Nohrstedt and Ottosen (2014), McLaughlin (2002), Hallin (1986), Zelizer and Allan (2002) and Piątkowska-Stepaniak and Nierenberg (2007). The domestication strategy, which has also been examined in my book, has been explained by Taradai (2014), Gomez Rodriguez (2007), Olausson (2013) and Joye (2015). When describing the news factors and their influence on the coverage, I referred to, for example, publications by Galtung and Ruge (1965), Gross and Kopper (2011), Shoemaker and Cohen (2006) and Golan et al. (2010). Issues regarding the Polish media and the Polish media system have

been described by, among others, Nowak (2014), Dobek-Ostrowska (2007 and 2012), Jakubowicz (2003), Bajomi-Lazar (2014) and Głowacki (2017). The characteristics of the analyzed dispute have been described by Lakomy (2016) and Parulski (2016), among others.

Although in the scientific literature, albeit to a greater extent in the foreign than in the Polish, the role of the media in presenting armed conflicts is quite extensively covered, it seems that there is a lack of empirical research, which in a comprehensive manner could describe these issues. In particular, studies are missing that would take into account the role of various types of media in covering a given armed conflict in the same time period, and which would be complemented with in-depth interviews with journalists. The state of research on the media coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict also seems to be limited in some ways. There has been little research carried out in the longer perspective, and which also takes into account the above-mentioned issues. I noted that much more research and publications on this subject have been made abroad than in Poland. The number of publications on the role of the Polish media in covering this story is rather small, and they usually concern the press market.

An initial analysis of the research material and relevant literature made it possible to create two research hypotheses and eleven research questions. The research hypotheses that will be tested in the study are:

- H1: An anti-Russian perspective is dominant in the Polish media coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.
- H2: Stressing the threat to the economic and military security of Poland was the dominant tool of domestication of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict by the Polish media.

The research questions with a detailed discussion on the methodological aspects of the study are presented in the second chapter.

Three research methods were used in the analysis – quantitative-qualitative (hybrid method), qualitative and comparative. These research methods have been supplemented by desk research, which is defined as a research technique.

The first research method is a quantitative-qualitative content analysis, which was used to analyze 1 726 research units with a code book consisting of 38 questions. The hybridization of the method, meaning the combination of quantitative analysis and frame analysis, allowed for an in-depth look at how and through what mechanisms the six Polish media outlets – the most popular tabloids, quality newspapers and television news programs – covered the conflict from 1st of March 2014 to 31st of March 2015.

The second research method used in the study has a qualitative character and was meant to supplement the content analysis. From April 2015 to January 2018, eleven in-depth interviews were conducted with journalists who covered the conflict in Ukraine during the selected research period. Ten of those journalists were employees of the media analyzed in this book, while one came from another medium. It was decided to include him in the list of respondents anyway due to his professional experience. The interviews were semi-structured, which made it possible to spontaneously ask follow-up questions and bring up issues that were not planned.

Comparative analysis is another research method that has found its application in the study. By comparing the results of the content analysis, it was possible to find similarities and differences in the different media's approach to covering the conflict. Furthermore, the answers given by the journalists were also compared to each other. This was interesting since the respondents came from different media outlets, and also because they covered the conflict from different places. Some of them were in Warsaw while others worked on the spot.

Secondary data, such as the Centre for Public Opinion Research's report on the Polish people's perception of the events in Ukraine, were also put to use in the research. It was possible to check if the way the conflict as well as the parties participating in it were presented by the media, correlated with the views of Polish society.

The choice of methods and techniques is justified by their character and the possibilities they offer the researcher. In addition, it seems that together they allowed for a comprehensive analysis of the way in which the Russian-Ukrainian conflict was covered by the Polish media. The content analysis combined with elements of frame analysis resulted in numerical data on the frequency of covered issues and sources of information, along with information about the attributes given to the actors in the dispute and the contexts used by journalists. It seems that using content analysis in this way could, in a sense, minimize its limitations, namely how it is mostly quantitative. On the other hand, I realize that the qualitative factors of the method are usually characterized by a dose of subjectivism, which is why it was necessary to also do in-depth interviews. The interviews were used to help further explore the results of the content analysis, especially to answer why something was presented in a certain way. This seems like an unquestionable advantage of combining in-depth interviews with content analysis. The use of the comparative method seemed necessary in turn considering the diversity of the studied media. The desk research has helped to broaden the research perspective and to see if the journalists' description of the events in Ukraine reflected the views of the media organization and perhaps the views of

the society to which they belong. I realize that the applied research methods, as well as the empirical nature of my study, do not result in a complete reflection of reality. However, with the aim of describing the coverage and domestication of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict by Polish journalists, as well as the influence of context-oriented factors – such as history and security concerns – it seems that the selected techniques and research methods, despite their limitations, have been chosen and applied properly.

This book consists of four chapters. The first one presents theoretical assumptions on the media coverage of wars and armed conflicts. I present a brief characteristic of the nature and causes of the conflict, explaining its hybridity and significance for Polish national security. Next the Polish media system is described. I define the concept of the media system, characterize its structure, and point to the role of its external environment and how it could affect the media coverage. I refer to Hallin's and Mancini's models (2004), and write about the hybridity of the Polish media system. The selected theories and strategies related to the role of the media in the conflict are also described in the chapter. I outline event-oriented and context-oriented factors in the coverage of foreign events. I define the concepts of war and peace journalism, write about the problem of journalistic partisanship, and the demonization and dehumanization of "the enemy" by the media. Domestication – its definition, typologies, and the factors that may determine the effectiveness of this strategy is also discussed in this chapter. Finally, the state of Polish and foreign research on the media coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict is presented.

The research methodology is described in the second chapter. The theme, subject, and aim of the research as well as research hypotheses and research questions – divided into main and specific research questions – are described. I further outline the scope of the research and the criteria for selecting the research period and the media qualified for the analysis. I also referred to the international research project "Ukraine 2014 - media war and the war in media" in which I participated and which constitutes an important contribution to the empirical part of my research. The research tools and methods used in the study – including the way they are constructed and used, as well as their advantages and disadvantages – are also presented.

In the third chapter I discuss the results of my content analysis and in-depth interviews with journalists. I present a list of the most commonly covered topics and most quoted sources of information. The dominant conflict perspective visible in the media, and how the dispute and actors involved in it were defined, has also been analyzed. Moreover, the journalists' views regarding their role in covering the conflict in Ukraine and problems related to it, as well as the impact

of prejudices and national stereotypes on how the parties to the dispute were perceived, are discussed in the chapter.

The analysis of the domestication of the conflict is presented in the fourth and last chapter of the book. The mechanisms of the media's domestication of the dispute are characterized with attention given to the use of frames and historical contexts in bringing the dispute closer to the audience. Attention is given to the frequency of historical references, comparisons to historical events and comparisons of Vladimir Putin to historical figures. The chapter also presents the extent to which the consequences of the conflict for Poland, such as the military threat and economic sanctions, were used by journalists when domesticating the dispute in Ukraine.

In the conclusion I verify the research hypotheses and try to answer the research questions. I refer to the legitimacy of the research techniques and methods I used, as well as write about problems that arose during the making of my research. I also suggest topics for further study that can complement and develop the analysis.

1 Theoretical perspectives of the conflict coverage

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict is one of the most important and disturbing events that have taken place in Eastern Europe during the last few years or even decades. Few of the disputes that were fought in this part of world after World War II, had such a great impact on the states in the region. Therefore, it can be expected that the interest of those countries and media that will be affected by the dispute will be high, and that journalists might try to domesticate the dispute by showing the audience that it concerns them directly. The character of this event, sometimes referred to as a hybrid war, may also be an important factor that can affect work of journalists. Therefore the conflict and its causes will be described in this chapter. It also seems necessary to present the theoretical foundation of war coverage and the media's domestication of this type of phenomena. Describing the Polish media system and how it relates to domestication and the coverage of the conflict seems equally important. The media system does not function in a vacuum, and elements such as the political and social environment can affect how content will be presented by journalists. By describing these factors it will be possible to show what kind of elements had an influence on the media coverage and domestication of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, and its perception by society.

1.1 Character of the conflict

The events in Ukraine, which coverage by the Polish media will be analyzed in this study, have had a fundamental impact not only on the relations of the parties to the conflict, but also on the security of countries that are located in its geographical proximity, such as Poland. The relations between Russia and the West, represented by the European Union, NATO and the United States, are also an important element of this dispute. In that way it can also be understood in a broader sense – as a cultural conflict. This interpretation has been brought up in several scientific publications (see Olchowski, 2017; Lakomy, 2016) and points to the event's multidimensional nature.

The nomenclature itself used to define the events in Ukraine, as a conflict, civil war, or hybrid war, shows that the situation can be understood quite differently. For this study, it was decided to use the first term, because it covers not only the understanding of the dispute as involving military operations, but also refers to

the political, economic and ideological battles that go on simultaneously. Baluk and Doroszko wrote that the annexation of Crimea and Russia's military aggression in Eastern Ukraine is the result of the imperial policy of the Kremlin and its rebirth, which manifests itself in the need to reinstate Russia's position in the world, especially in Eastern Europe (2017: 8). Although Russia is not officially a party to the dispute, through giving economic and military support to the pro-Russian separatists, the Kremlin plays a significant role. The two-dimensional nature of the dispute, being fought at both a military and informational level, is a factor in favor of recognizing the situation in Ukraine as a dispute between two states – Russia and Ukraine. This way of defining the conflict was also noticeable in political discourse. The then Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk, for example, put it forward in a speech in March, 2014 (Kancelaria Premiera, 2014). Bronisław Komorowski – the former president of Poland (*Konflikt...*, 2014), Radosław Sikorski – the then Minister of Foreign Affairs (*Sikorski ...*, 2014) as well as Joe Biden – the former vice-president of the United States (Brookings Institution, 2015) all spoke about the events in Ukraine in this way. Therefore, the term “conflict” also often appeared in the media discourse, which meant that it was decided to use this wording also for this study.

When talking about the causes of the dispute, first and foremost, attention should be paid to events directly preceding the research period. This includes the Euromaidan Revolution and the Revolution of Dignity – which is recognized as a part of the former – the escape of Viktor Yanukovich from Ukraine, and the announcement and later referendum and annexation of Crimea by Russia. The annexation, which was not accepted by the international community due to it violating the Budapest Memorandum and the Russia-Ukraine inter-state treaty, may be considered the direct starting point of the armed operations in Eastern Ukraine (Bebler, 2014). However, I realize that the roots of the analyzed dispute are much more complex than that, and have to do with events in the distant past.

The outbreak of the conflict resulted from many different causes, which can be divided into internal and external ones. Included in these are minor categories such as history, socio-cultural issues and economic and political factors. Regarding historical issues, which together with socio-cultural factors constitute an important element that shapes national identity, it should be noted that Vladimir Putin's ideological policy of the so-called Russian World and its defense, is considered to be one of the causes of the hybrid conflict between Russia and Ukraine (Gergało-Dąbek, 2017: 99). According to Plokhyy, Russia does not recognize Ukraine as a separate nation (2012: 144), which was manifested by the independence efforts of Ukrainians in the past being blocked (Serczyk, 2001: 208). Riabchuk notes that during his speech at the NATO Summit in Bucharest in

2008, Putin pointed to the nationality problems of Ukraine, as well as the fact that Russians inhabit southern Ukraine, which according to the researcher was Putin's "first territorial claims on what he later termed Novorossiia" (2016: 75). Moreover, Riabchuk believes that Russia's actions toward Georgia and support for the independence of South Ossetia were a form of introduction to what later happened in Crimea (2016: 75). Russia's support for the separatists in Moldova is also considered as a policy of destabilizing the nations of the former Soviet Union (Van Metre et al., 2015: 2). That is why some researchers claim that the socio-cultural and later military war against Ukraine began before the Russian intervention in the Crimea and the Donbass (Gergało-Dąbek, 2017: 99).

Vladimir Putin has repeatedly referred to the need to protect Russian-speaking minorities and Russia's right to defend Russian-speaking populations living outside the country (Lally and Englund, 2014). The war in Donbass and the annexation of Crimea itself was explained by Putin as necessary to defend the Russian population against the so-called Ukrainian fascism (see Riabchuk, 2016: 80; Zhurzhenko, 2015). According to Parulski, the people of Russian origin who live as a majority on Crimea, and the Ukrainians who speak Russian as their native language, asked Putin to incorporate the Peninsula to the Russian Federation, which then happened after a referendum (2016: 78–79). He claims that the Russian ethnic group inhabiting the Crimean Peninsula – which has always been considered an important strategic point in the Black Sea region – was used as a tool to externally destabilize Ukraine (2016: 80) and justify a military intervention by the Kremlin.

The language issue, which has a significant impact on the national and cultural independence, and thus also on national identity, is a matter of some importance in Ukraine and might concern the internal dimension of the dispute. The people who are living in Eastern Ukraine, for example in Donetsk or Luhansk, speak mostly Russian and that might influenced them to have strongly pro-Russian views. This division resulted from the collapse of the Soviet Union and the partitions of its territory and the people that inhabit it, which to a lesser or greater extent is more pro-Ukrainian or pro-Russian (Lakomy, 2016: 288). That was, according to some researchers (see Parulski, 2016), one of the issues present during the outbreak of the conflict and also its later development into military operations. Self-proclaimed republics – the Luhansk People's Republic and the Donetsk People's Republic – were then created in Ukraine and were not recognized by the state authorities as legitimate entities. However, Boyd-Barrett (2017), Mylovanov (2016) and Wilson (2016) question the role of ethnicity and language as a key elements of the dispute. A survey carried out by the Kiev International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) in April 2014 about "Opinions and

views of the citizens of Southern and Eastern regions of Ukraine” shows that “imposition of one language” was one of the least important factors that made the respondents anxious at that time (*The Views and...*, 2014). The respondents more often pointed, for example, to “raging of banditry in the country”, “collapse of Ukrainian economy”, “threat of civil war”, “non-payment of salaries and pensions”, and other factors (*The Views and...*, 2014). Mylovanov (2016) writes that economic factors rather than those associated with ethnicity and language might be more relevant for explaining the pro-Russian separatists’ actions. The different opinions of scientists on the importance of ethnic and linguistic causes of the conflict show the complexity of the dispute and how difficult it is to investigate.

The Crimean crisis, which has been an important element of the Ukrainian conflict, was also caused by political and economic issues. Doroszko argues that while the handing over of Crimea to Ukraine in 1954 was not a problem since Ukraine was then subordinated to the Soviet Union, after its collapse the “Crimean issue” became more important in the Russian-Ukrainian relations (2017). Crimea is a region rich in natural resources, including oil. Because of the mining potential of the deposits located there it is a very important area. That is why it is possible that Russia’s actions were motivated by fear of losing the Peninsula and also Ukraine in general from its sphere of influence, especially in a situation where Ukraine was coming closer to the European Union. In general, the eastern regions of Ukraine, which are inhabited by a Russian-speaking population and ethnic Russians, are geared towards industry, while the central and western region of the country is a more agricultural area (Strasheim, 2016: 7–8). Therefore, it can be assumed that developmental issues had an important role to play in the analyzed dispute.

The interdependence between Russia and Ukraine can be seen both at the political and economic levels. The economic dependence of Ukraine to Russia was already noticeable in the so-called gas wars and loans granted to Ukraine by Russia. Financial issues, such as the guarantee of receiving financial support from the Kremlin (Valadai Discussion Club, 2014: 28) needed to reduce the budget deficit of Ukraine, is said to be the cause of Yanukovich decision to suspend the signing of the Ukraine-European Union Association Agreement. This in consequence led to the anti-government demonstrations known as the Euromaidan to intensify (Wittkowsky, 2014: 2). Baluk therefore believes that the internal political problems of Ukraine were also the result of Russia’s actions and its support for the presidency of Yanukovich and later the separatists (Baluk and Doroszko, 2017: 74–75). The internal instability of Ukraine is generally recognized as one of the reasons behind the dispute and its intensification (Van Metre

et al., 2015). For example, the weakness of Ukraine's political structures, which led to the so-called Orange Revolution and later to the Euromaidan protests, was such a factor. Although progress toward democratization occurred after the Orange Revolution and during Yushchenko's presidency, during Yanukovych times it became somewhat stalled. On the other hand, the Orange Revolution showed that Ukraine is a divided country, since the southern-eastern parts of it, which supported Viktor Yanukovych, sought autonomy and even secession from the rest of the country (Gromadzki et al., 2004). Moreover, Lakomy notes that the agreement from February 21, 2014 on the termination of the Euromaidan protests and Yanukovych's removal from office, did not take into account the interests of all groups and regions, which in a sense worsened the chaos (2016: 285). He adds that the difficulties of the new government in keeping control over the whole country and dealing with economic and political crises, as well as its lack of acceptance from the Russian-speaking citizens, led to the protests in the Crimea and Donbass (Lakomy, 2016: 285–285). In turn, that led to Russia's military involvement and regular military operations.

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict can also be understood as a geopolitical dispute between Russia and the West, which is expressed by the position of Ukraine itself. On the one hand, it seeks to be a part of the European Union and NATO – in this way being more brought under the influence of the West, which is difficult for the Kremlin to accept. According to Lakomy, this is perceived as jeopardizing Russian national security, and it might also be seen as a violation of the Russian sphere of influence by the West (2016: 305–306). The geographical location of Ukraine and its potential impact on the security of neighboring countries is also a feature of this dispute. Olchowski wrote about the erosion of trust between Russia and Ukraine as well as Russia and the West, when Russia violated the primacy of international law by acting against Ukraine (2017: 157). This, in turn, led to economic and political sanctions which only deepened mutual aversion. Moreover, the problem of consensus among members of the European Union regarding the legitimacy of imposing sanctions on Russia, and the impact of the dispute on NATO's actions, shows that the conflict was a crisis of great magnitude for the international community.

The character of the analyzed conflict is also one of the important issues related to its course. The dispute is referred to as a hybrid war, but according to Pacek the concept itself is not defined in any universal way (2018: 25), which means that researchers who deal with this subject understand it differently. In Nemeth's opinion, a hybrid conflict is characterized by: disinformation and propaganda, the use of available technological means, guerilla activities and difficulties in distinguishing between civil and military participants of the conflict (2002). It

seems that this definition is accurate, because it draws attention to the asymmetrical character of the relations within the conflict. In particular, hybrid war involves “the de-monopolization of the use of force by the state actors” (Pietraś, 2017: 22) and the possibility of it being used by others, for example, non-state actors, which is what has occurred in the case of the conflict in Ukraine.

Pietraś wrote that the fact that Russia has not made a formal declaration of war against Ukraine should be seen as a political strategy by the Kremlin and their version of hybrid war (2017: 27). This is confirmed by Levchenko who refers to the so-called Gerasimov doctrine (2016). This assumes an increase in the role of non-military factors like destroying the attacked state’s critical infrastructure, and thereby reducing its political or economic potential (2016: 25). Indeed, so-called soft power was important during the dispute, which according to Darczewska was a part of Russia’s bigger strategy toward Ukraine which was implemented for several years (2014: 5–6). This involved, for example, spreading information about the dispute through the mass media. A significant portion of the content created by the parties to the conflict was, however, published on social media and blogs (Dougherty, 2014: 2). Szewczenko mentions, among the tools of Russia’s information operation, (2017: 134–135): publishing false photos and videos, attributing pro-fascist attitudes to the Ukrainian society, spreading the ideology of the “Russian World”, and blaming the war on Ukraine. Manipulating online discourse using so-called cyber-trolls, and organizing attacks in cyberspace, were also among the tactics used. Baezner and Robin point to the existence of pro-Russian hacker groups – exemplified by “Cyber Berkut” which supports the separatists – but also pro-Ukrainian hacker groups – including “Cyber Hundred”, which removes pro-Russian trolls from Ukrainian websites (2017: 10).

The information dimension of the dispute was also about misleading the opponent. Military units operated in a flexible and efficient way (Snegovaya, 2015: 17), which made it difficult to determine their actual position. That is why the information campaign also sought to cover up Russia’s military involvement in the conflict as well as justify retaliatory action (Snegovaya, 2015: 9). Russia’s limited military operations were meant to prevent this state from being defined as an aggressor engaged in a war, which was supposed to save it from the international sanctions (Skoneczny, 2015: 45). The information campaign was therefore also directed to the international community (Szewczenko, 2017: 132).

The actions taken on the information level were supplemented by a military invasion (Kofman and Rojansky, 2015: 3) which might be exemplified by the Russians taking Crimea. According to Pacek, lacking any legal solutions because war had not formally been declared, as well as the so-called “little green men”

taking action, led to the Ukrainian authorities being paralyzed and the military units not taking adequate measures (2018: 68–69). The economic and military support given to separatists – like transferring weapons, training and intelligence activities (Menkiszak and Konończuk, 2015) – may be an indicator of the dispute's hybridity, and an example of the implementation of Russia's strategic goals. The very strategy of the pro-Russian militants, combining a guerilla war with more modern ways of fighting (see Pacek, 2018: 77) is also a hybrid, which shows the conflict's multidimensional character.

According to the Gerasimov doctrine, social destabilization is an important element of war, and the anti-government demonstrations in the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine, as well as economically weakening Ukraine through it being forced to wage war, can be a reflection of that doctrine (see Levchenko, 2016: 25–27; Pacek, 2018: 93–95). The strategy of information warfare itself was aimed at strengthening pro-separatist sentiment among the inhabitants of the pro-Russian regions in eastern Ukraine (Dougherty, 2014: 4–5) which in turn was one of the causes of demonstrations erupting, and which added to the conflict's hybridity. The threat of limiting or completely cutting off gas supplies (see Vasyuta, 2016: 57; Sienkiewicz, 2015) also demonstrates the complexity of the Kremlin's actions toward Ukraine.

The hybrid character of the conflict in Ukraine could also have influenced the way it was covered by the media. It may have led, for example, to difficulties in accessing sources of information and the conflict area, which in turn affected the quality of the news material and its objectivity. It also required the media to be much more careful in checking sources. The journalists' security could also be at risk, mainly due to the irregularity of the military operations. Furthermore, the disinformation being spread widely could have led journalists to not only risk physical harm, but also to be misinformed by propaganda. This propaganda threat could have affected both journalists working directly on the spot, as well as those reporting from a distance.

1.2 The Polish media system

The way we define and understand media systems has been transforming over the years. The factors used to define them have been, *inter alia*, the nature of the political regime (see Siebert et al., 1956; Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995; Hallin and Mancini, 2004) as well as territorial and, for example, technological factors (McQuail, 2000). Nowak (2014: 168), and earlier Jakubowicz (2010: 4), noted that there is a lack of literature on the factual definition of media systems, and researchers who deal with this topic usually refer to specific elements

or typologies of media systems. One of the general definitions of the phenomenon was presented by McQuail, who stated that the media system is a collection of mass media functioning in a specific country and in various sectors, such as the press, radio and television (2000: 212). The British researcher draws attention to two important elements – that the media system is divided into different sectors – and that these smaller sectors are affected by their geographical conditions. Territorial factors in particular, along with political, economic and cultural elements, affect how the same event can be presented in different ways by different national media. Therefore, it seems interesting to pay attention to the factors that might affect the functioning of the Polish media system and subsequently the coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. The characteristics of the national media system and its relations with the external environment may decide how a certain event will be presented.

Dobek-Ostrowska when analyzing the structure of the media system draws attention to such elements as the core of the system, including for example the press and TV systems – and also lists the primary and the secondary markets (2007: 16–17). The markets mentioned by the researcher are in fact a part of the external environment of the media system, which determine its functioning to a greater or lesser extent. Among the factors that may affect the information presented by television, radio, the press and new media, are the mass media audience, advertisers (primary market) and regulatory institutions (secondary market) (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2007: 17). It seems that these elements are parts of the external pressure spheres mentioned by McQuail (2000: 250) – such as economic pressure, political and social pressure, the audience and the sphere of culture – and may influence how specific outlets and journalists work. It is difficult to clearly answer which of these factors has the greatest effect on the functioning of the media system. Therefore, it seems important to describe the level of political parallelism of Polish media and how domestic media organizations are influenced by economic and social pressure. Then it will be possible to answer the question of why the national journalists covered the Russian-Ukrainian conflict as they did.

Hallin and Mancini's media systems models are based on four variables – press development, the level of political parallelism, journalistic professionalism and degree of state intervention (2010: 21). However, Central and Eastern Europe is not included in these models. But some of its elements may be used to describe the functioning of the media from this region as well. Mancini claims that in the case of the Central and Eastern Europe, it is necessary to talk about a kind of hybridization of his models (2015: 30–35). He notes that journalistic professionalism in Poland is well-developed, which in his opinion is best exemplified

by *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Mancini, 2015: 30–31). A high level of media professionalization is especially characteristic of the liberal model and to a lesser extent of the democratic corporatist model (Hallin and Mancini, 2010: 67). Therefore, Mancini's recognition of the presence of this factor in the case of some Polish media outlets is a confirmation of the hybrid nature of the media system. On the other hand, the market logic or the logic of commercial media is also noticeable in the case of most Polish media outlets (Smolak, 2016b: 153), which also confirms its hybridization, because in this way Poland is approaching to the liberal model.

The transformation of the national media market that occurred after the collapse of the communist regime, led to changes in ownership structure and privatization as well as commercialization. The press now remains mostly in the hands of private owners, while in the case of electronic media it is possible to talk about a structural dualism of ownership, being divided into commercial/private media outlets and public media (Szynol, 2011: 236). The changes in the ownership structure also led to the emergence of new media outlets and competitiveness. It is noticeable in every national media sector, and it may have influenced the emergence of foreign investors (Bajomi-Lazar, 2014: 109), which can be considered as something that led to greater media pluralism. Indeed, the number of media outlets available in print and on the internet gives the Polish recipient access to a significant number of information sources. The most frequently chosen means of receiving information by Poles are television and the internet, while newspapers are less popular (Garlicki, 2015: 79), which in this respect brings Poland closer to the polarized pluralist model, where newspaper readership is low. Furthermore, gossip and lifestyle press titles are listed among the most widely read newspapers in Poland (Kurdupski, 2017; Polskie Badania Czytelnictwa, 2018/2019). This might indicate that readers are turning away from quality press to tabloids, which in turn could affect the development and deepening of the tabloidization of the media. Similar tendencies are noticeable in the case of the internet (Dziomdziora, 2015: 58) and television markets (Szynol, 2013: 213), which shows that the Polish media behave in line with market logic. Hordecki and Piontek notice the same processes both in the case of a public broadcaster – the Polish Television, as well as a private one – TVN, which in their opinion is expressed in the emotionalism of information, as well as in the simplification of the language (2010: 30). This is interesting, because both of these TV stations were analyzed during this study of the coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, and the processes described above could have affected how this event was presented. It is especially interesting considering that wars and conflicts are hard news.

The changing nature of the selected media organizations from information to more infotainment may help them get a larger audience and increased interest from advertisers. It is worth noting that it is the advertising revenues, also in the case of public media, that constitute the majority of the media's revenues (Głowacki, 2017: 171). Therefore, it can be expected that the pressure of economic factors on the work of journalists will be high, and indeed it is. In the results of the international research project "Journalism in Change – professional journalistic cultures in Poland, Russia and Sweden" it was noticed that the impact of advertisers on topic selection is rather significant (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2015: 219), as well as the risk of influence by foreign owners or ownership in general on the journalistic work (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2015: 225–227). It confirms that in the case of domestic media, economic pressure is important and economic factors may basically determine the way media organizations behave and the nature of the content they make. The struggle for advertising revenues and succumbing to economic pressure is understandable, given the fact that the level of concentration of media ownership and the cross-media ownership in general – especially on the press and television market – is relatively high in Poland. It may be exemplified in the case of Agora, Ringier Axel Springer Poland (Szynol, 2011: 242) and the TVN group and Polsat (Bereźnicki, 2017). This type of phenomenon leads to a situation where it is possible to talk about "market colonization by internal and external" media owners (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2015: 215). That is why informational pluralism is not so obvious, when most of the consumed news is produced by a few big media companies. On the other hand, the recipients' relative ability to choose their preferred content, as well as the media organizations acting in accordance with market logic, makes Poland more similar to the democratic corporatist model, or even the liberal model, than to the polarized pluralist model. Furthermore, the level of political parallelism in Poland, understood as relations between the media and political actors, is still relatively high. The level of state intervention, especially in the area of public media, is also strong. Therefore, the polarized pluralist model may also have some application in the case of Poland.

Dobek-Ostrowska (2012), when writing about the Polish media system in the context of fitting it into one of the models proposed by Hallin and Mancini, refers to the concept of Italianization (see Splichal 1994; Goban-Klas, 1997: 40) and Mediterraneanization (Jakubowicz, 2008: 47), which describe the media systems' transformation in post-communist countries. Although the concepts differ in defining the path that these countries have undergone, each of them underlines the strong role of the state in the media system. This is confirmed by Dobek-Ostrowska who wrote about the importance of external pluralism and the

tradition of commentary journalism in Poland, as well as the instrumentalization of public broadcasters by the authorities (2012: 49). Indeed, considering the degree of political influence on the appointment of the controlling bodies of the public media and thus also the influence on their content, it is possible to talk about Poland being close to the polarized pluralist model. On the other hand, the financial model of public media, which includes both subscription fees and advertising revenues, is not usually something that political actors use to apply pressure (Głowacki, 2017). Printed media, which remain in the hands of private owners, also cannot count on press subsidies, which is otherwise a feature of the polarized pluralist model and the democratic corporatist model. However, the state control takes other forms, such as the above mentioned appointment of the supervising bodies of public media, and the ability to impose fines on electronic media broadcasters. That occurred for example when the National Broadcasting Council imposed a 1.5 million Polish zloty fine on TVN for alleged violations of 18th article of the Broadcasting Act (1992), which was actually related to the fact that the medium was reporting on anti-government protests (*KRRiT ujawniła...*, 2018). Although the penalty was withdrawn, inter alia after the critical reactions by representatives of the European Union and the United States, it shows that the influence of political actors on the functioning of the media, also indirectly through controlling bodies, is significant.

Bajomi-Lazar, when describing the relationship between the media and the political system in Poland, wrote about the political party colonization of the media (2014). He compared the periods of the centre-left Miller-Belka governments (2001–2005) to the conservative Marcinkiewicz-Kaczyński governments (2005–2007) and noted two forms of media colonization: multi-party colonization with one party being dominant (the first period) and one-party colonization (the second period) (2014: 144). The distinction proposed by Bajomi-Lazar does not only apply to the political actors' relations with public media, although the impact on these is in fact the greatest. That is why despite the level of relations between public service broadcasters and politicians is strong, other media outlets may also show support for certain political forces. Moreover, although the typology proposed by Bajomi-Lazar refers to a time before the research period of my analysis, some similarities to the former Civic Platform governments (2007–2015) and now the Law and Justice government (from November 2015) can be noted. The first of these political parties was a member of the government during the research period of this study. Therefore, in the case of the Civic Platform it was possible to observe the multi-party colonization with a dominant party concept. In turn, the Law and Justice party behaves in this respect similar as in the 2005–2007 years.

Despite the changes of the ruling groups, some general patterns remain similar – including the political influence on the functioning of the media and the media support for certain political actors. But the political system's control of the media system intensified in time. This was noticeable in media freedom indexes. For example, according to Reporters Without Borders, Poland was ranked 18th in 2015, while in 2016 it was 47th, in 2017 54th and in 2018 58th in the ranking (*World Press...*, 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018). According to Freedom House, in 2015 (26th position) and 2016 (28th position) Poland was described as free in the context of press freedom, while in 2017 (34th position) it was only partially free (*Freedom of the Press*, 2015, 2016 and 2017). This shows that changes in the political sphere can influence the media and its actions.

Interestingly, according to Polish journalists the political connections of media organizations, including the political interests of the media owners and pressure from political actors in general, are of little importance (Michel, 2016: 140–146). This was less obvious for journalists employed in the Polish Television, who had a problem with clearly identifying whether such a relationship was relevant or not (Michel, 2016: 140). Therefore, although the level of political parallelism of the Polish media may be generally high, the impact of political actors on the media is not really so significant, except in the case of public media. Much more important is the economic factor, which more strongly than political pressure affects the activities of journalists and media owners. On the other hand, in the press and in particular the largest national dailies and weeklies, there are likely some ideological bonds to political actors. The same applies to the largest television stations. However, the level of politicization of private media, especially those thought of as quality media in Poland, can be described as medium – a conditional support for a given political party – while in the case of tabloids it can be considered low, with unpredictable support for a party – or very low, when the medium is fully neutral (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2007: 42–43). Therefore, some Polish media outlets are characterized by external pluralism, while others have internal pluralism.

Internal pluralism may be particularly noticeable in the case of tabloids (Wojdyła, 2011: 23) and the television station Polsat which is one of the most popular stations in Poland (Nowak, 2014: 190–195). The pluralism of opinion presented by these media can be manifested in a greater variety of political viewpoints than in the case of other media. According to Jakubowicz, despite the observable changes in the field of media tabloidization or commercialization, and thus processes that in a way lead to de-politicizing media coverage, many print media in Poland are still acting in an opinion-forming manner, representing specific groups or political ideas (2003: 238). For example, *Gazeta Wyborcza* has a

center-left orientation showing voluntary support for the Civic Platform, while *Gazeta Polska Codziennie* and *Nasz Dziennik* are right-wing national dailies (Bajomi-Lazar, 2014: 110). There is also political polarization in the case of press weeklies. For example, *Newsweek Polska* supports the Civic Platform, while *Sieci* and *Do Rzeczy* show sympathy for the Law and Justice, which is reflected in the content presented by these media. In turn, regional press dailies remain in the hands of foreign owners such as Poland Press (Polska Press), which is a part of the German media group Verlagsgruppe Passau (Szynol, 2011: 242), and therefore it is possible to observe escapism in their content and less interest in politics (Sobera, 2017: 97). The fact that media are in the hands of foreign owners does not necessarily mean that they will be apolitical, as exemplified by *Newsweek* and *TVN* which both show support for the Civic Platform. Despite there being private and foreign owners on the media market, political- and commentary-oriented journalism can still be found there.

The diversity of the Polish media system, which on the one hand is fairly commercialized (Nowak, 2014: 183), while also being quite strongly politicized, makes it describable as a hybrid (see Voltmer, 2008: 23–24; Dobek-Ostrowska, 2012: 49; Mancini, 2015). The diverse character of the national media system may make the coverage of the conflict in Ukraine look different depending on the studied medium. Moreover, although the analyzed event has an international character, and that the level of political parallelism of the media should not play a key role in this case, it seems that it could in fact have affected how the conflict and its parties were described. This is due to the fact that, especially in the case of public media, as well as those providing voluntary or conditional support to certain political parties (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2007: 42–43), it is possible that the discourse of political actors can influence the media coverage and vice versa. Consequently, both discourses may complement each other, and one of them may play a more dominant role.

The interaction and mutual influence between political and media discourse is in some sense quite obvious. The question is rather – how does the content presented by the media affect the audience? Of course, certain media target, for example ideologically, a given group of recipients to which they direct their message. In turn, these recipients, for example by buying a newspaper or viewing a given TV station or program, can manifest their interest and support for the medium's perspective. It is worth remembering that the audience tends to accept the perspective visible in the media coverage – especially when the recipients cannot verify the information in any other way, for example due to geographic distance or language differences. Besides, although the described results of the international research showed that the impact of political actors

on the domestic media may be relatively low, it is possible that in the case of events that are relevant to the so-called *raison d'état*, this impact might be higher. Such an event for Poland is undoubtedly the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Moreover, in a time of armed conflict, national interest, patriotism and general ethnocentrism seem to exert stronger influence on journalists (Sreedharan, 2013: 457). That is why domestic journalists may in this way be more subjected to social influence on their work. Analyzes of the journalistic culture in Poland showed that among the factors influencing the selection of topics presented by the media – “audience interest” and “needs and interests of society” are considered by journalists as important (Nygren, 2015: 140). Therefore, the newsroom’s consideration of the recipients’ opinions, especially in a situation that is socially significant – and the Ukrainian conflict is surely that kind of situation – may make the audience’s influence important. It should be remembered that the journalists’ work is not only affected by the editorial line or the business model of the medium, but also by national or other group affiliations. Nygren notes that the audience can have an impact in the sense that the media need to adapt their content to market expectations (2015: 140–141). But in the case of the social environment it seems much more difficult than in the case of the economic or political one, to explain to what extent this factor actually affects media content. However, it is recognized by journalists as one of the most important elements in this respect.

The character of the Polish media system and the external environment’s potential influence on it shows that when analyzing the coverage and domestication of an international event by national media, it is necessary to consider several different factors. These factors can, to a greater or lesser extent, have an impact on the perspective of the Russian-Ukrainian dispute that is presented by the media, as well as its general perception.

1.3 The role of the media in the conflict

The media influence on the perception of wars and armed conflicts by the society or political actors, as well as the impact of social and political discourse on the media discourse has been fairly widely presented in the scientific literature. Much attention has been devoted to the presentation of the external disputes by journalists, as well as those in which the country of the certain media outlet took part or was strongly involved in. Considering the fact that the Russian-Ukrainian conflict is an external conflict for Poland, albeit having a strong impact on the country’s situation, attention will be paid to the way media present that kind of foreign events, as well as the reasons for the journalists’ interest in covering them.

1.3.1 The media coverage of conflicts

McCombs and Shaw believe that society not only learns about certain issues from the media, but is also affected by how much attention the media gives these issues (1972). Different variables determine how important and interesting an event is for journalists to cover. Taking into account the fact that in most cases the covered wars and armed conflicts are foreign events, it seems important to pay attention to what affects the value of international situations from the perspective of the media.

A distinction between the elements that determine how foreign events are presented can be made between event-oriented and context-oriented factors (Zerback and Holzleitner, 2018: 367). The first of the concepts refers to the nature of the event itself and its newsworthiness, for example its negative consequences, sensationalism, relevance, topicality, deviance, and how extraordinary it is (see Chang et al., 1987; Shoemaker and Cohen, 2006). In the case of context-oriented elements, also defined as relation-oriented factors (see Zerback and Holzleitner, 2018: 369; Segev, 2015), the most important thing is the relations between the covering state and the covered state, which could affect the media's interest in the given event. Political, economic, cultural and social factors as well as economic proximity and similarity are taken into account in this aspect (Gross and Kopper, 2011: 92). It is assumed that these factors determine, on the one hand, the background and the source of the given information, and on the other hand, the relationship with the external environment (Golan et al., 2010: 263).

It seems that the context-oriented elements may have a greater significance in the case of covering foreign events such as armed conflicts. The context given could in this case be the involvement of the covering state in the dispute, both directly – for example militarily – and indirectly through territorial proximity and support. But the support can also be symbolic, given to the one of the parties to the conflict. Furthermore, the perception of the actors in the event may have an impact on the media interest in it. However, Cottle notes that the character of the armed conflict itself determines whether the media will be interested in it or not, and how the coverage will look (2009: 499). He believes that the new armed conflicts are characterized by a high level of violence (Cottle, 2009), which in the media's point of view is related to negativity and sensationalism, and thus connected to event-oriented factors (Świąś, 2007: 283). The brutal character of war may therefore be reflected in the brutality of the media coverage, which according to Hodalska has been noticeable since the Gulf War (2006).

In Galtung and Ruge's opinion, events that have negative consequences, for instance military operations, are rare and usually unexpected, and can therefore

more easily take the form of news (1965: 69–70). This is due to the fact that they are not common phenomena. Consequently, the media may be more interested in covering them than other issues. The event's negativity can also be expressed by how it is referred to. Cox pays particular attention to the concept of war and the use of that term in the context of government actions (2016). One example is the so-called war on drugs, which showed that this concept has mostly negative connotations (Cox, 2016: 7), and can in turn influence the media coverage and the way it is perceived by the society. It seems that in combination with other criteria of newsworthiness, for example closeness – territorial, political or cultural – the likelihood that a negative issue appears in the media increases.

Sreedharan notices that in the case of war journalism, the relationship between media discourse and political discourse can be strong, especially in the context of legitimizing the claims of the authorities and the way the “enemy” is portrayed (2013: 462). These types of activities can also be, or perhaps are primarily, noticeable in the case of the external disputes (Liebes, 1992). The coverage of external disputes usually give a lot of focus to the actions of authorities at the national and international level. Similarly, the national media usually keep an eye on the coverage by foreign media (Cottle, 2009: 501). Ross also points out that the media has an important role to play in international affairs – on the basis of their reporting people learn about what is happening in the world (2007), which can affect political decisions. In addition, taking into account the influence of the aforementioned elements, it is possible to conclude that the coverage of international events may be influenced by external factors. That is why Shaw believes that modern wars are influenced by media organizations, as well as international institutions and society (2005).

The role of the media, as an actor or, in a sense, a participant in the dispute may be significant (Nohrstedt and Ottosen, 2014: 74). Taylor even pointed out that some wars may be conducted in a two-way manner – by the military and in the media (1997) – and thus there are two types of battlefields. The media can serve to strengthen the sense of fear in relation to the actions of a given entity, and can also be an instrument of the so-called information war, which can be exemplified by the conflict analyzed in this book. This way of conducting a war on two fronts was also described by Russ-Mohl (2013). The researcher wrote about two models of war coverage where two fronts exist at the same time – on the real battlefield and in the media (2013: 222–223). Russ-Mohl said that on each of these fronts there are two warring parties that compete against each other for various gains (2013). On the military front, Russ-Mohl lists such objectives as power and domination, while at the media level the warring parties strive for social attention and moral support (2013: 222). According to the researcher, the

two models for how the journalist can cover the war are as follows: either he remains distanced and non-partisan, or he stays under the influence of his culture and community, and thus he takes a biased approach (2013: 223). The researcher referred, *inter alia*, to so-called embedded journalism and the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Russ-Mohl, 2013), where most of the American correspondents were accommodated in barracks, along with the army (Czapnik, 2007: 361). But strong relations between journalists and the fighting forces were already noticeable as far back as World War I and II (McLaughlin, 2002: 58–63). The journalists in these conflicts mostly had access to information provided by the army, so the government to a large extent controlled what the media covered. As a result, the coverage was influenced by entities that were, *de facto*, parties to the dispute, and who could present the event according to their perspective in order to obtain the resources assumed in the second model.

The importance of the media in portraying international events means that the media who cover wars and armed conflicts could in a way be considered as similar to political actors (Szostok et al., 2016). Media outlets can be “directly and indirectly” involved in “conflict negotiation and resolution” (2016: 157). By presenting information in a specific way journalists can, for example, influence the decisions of other entities. According to Ottosen, journalists and the media are in fact parts of the “security policy environment” (2005: 12), and have an effect on the real world through their messages. The war in Vietnam and the so-called war on terror are good examples of how the media can also act as propagandists – both in the case of external and internal disputes (see Nohrstedt et al., 2000; Zelizer and Allan, 2002). Furthermore, propaganda it is one of the factors that, according to Ross, affects the media’s coverage of military operations (2007). This is due to the fact that the event may be presented in almost black and white way.

Hallin, when analyzing the American media’s coverage of the Vietnam war, formulated a theory of three spheres of influence – consensus, legitimate controversy, and deviance – which also had to do with the relationship between political/elite and media discourse (1986). In the first sphere there is a general agreement about some issues that are not questioned at all, which manifests itself in a passive or even propagandist type of coverage (see Hallin, 1986; Hallin, 2013: 99). Hallin exemplifies this type of media behavior with how war was covered up until 1968, when the media supported the authorities’ perspective (1986). The sphere of legitimate controversy includes everything that can be subject to public debate and disagreement, and journalists take a neutral watchdog role (Hallin, 1986). The sphere of deviance covers issues that are deemed unimportant or unacceptable to be brought up in public debate, and if they are brought

up they are usually condemned. Hallin's spheres are described in reference to an international dispute where the national army was involved, but it seems that this concept can also be used in cases where the media cover external disputes. Moreover, the war coverage proposed by Russ-Mohl (2013) seems to somewhat reflect Hallin's spheres – especially the first two. Therefore, in the case of the sphere of consensus, the mainstream media – despite their internal differences – can cover international issues in the same way, for example through the prism of national prejudices and the government line. When it comes to the sphere of legitimate controversy, the opposite can occur.

Besides the propaganda role of the media, Ross (2007) when referring to international research on conflict coverage, also mentioned such issues as the pressure and influence of political actors – as well as the foreign policy of the country, economic issues – expressed by the popularity of a given event, social norms and emotions (Aslam, 2014: 19). The researcher pointed out that the media may cover the conflict in a way that serves the real or hidden goals of the players involved in the dispute (see Ross, 2007; Aslam, 2014), which is to some extent the result of the factors she mentioned. That is why Galtung believes that the contemporary media coverage of armed conflicts is in general war-oriented (2006), which therefore coincides with the elements of conflict reporting presented by Ross (2007).

Galtung proposed two forms of covering military action – war and peace journalism – and examined the different behaviors of journalists during the coverage of wars (2006). Due to the Polish media's level of political parallelism, and the tendency of some journalists to present messages in line with political discourse, as well as the relatively negative way that Russia is perceived, it is assumed that the model of war journalism would fit best with the coverage of the dispute. It should be noted that the characteristics of Galtung's concepts of war and peace journalism are based on four contrasting points (2006). War journalism is war/violence-oriented, propaganda-oriented, elite-oriented and victory-oriented, while peace journalism is people-oriented, solution-oriented, truth-oriented and generally peace-oriented (see Galtung, 2006; Nohrstedt and Ottosen, 2014: 86). It could perhaps be assumed that war-oriented journalism is more common than the peace-oriented type, especially in the case of mainstream media coverage of modern conflicts. This is because large media organizations – for example due to connections with national and transnational political actors and organizations, the domination of Western standards in war journalism, or simply because of the profit motive – are more interested in showing the conduct of the dispute rather than investigating its causes and how it could be ended peacefully. It might even be the case that the media can have the effect of fueling conflicts instead of

finding a way to make peace. For some media that are loyal to the government, though, that depends on the solution preferred by the national authorities.

There is no doubt that the media coverage of war determines the way in which the event and also the entities participating in it is seen by the recipients, who in turn may in some way influence how the dispute will develop and perhaps end (Eskjaer et al., 2015). It is also recognized that the coverage of foreign events may be related to the foreign policy of the covering state, which is manifested by negative reporting on countries defined as our enemies, and our allies being portrayed positively (see Bennett, 1990; Wanta, 2012: 47). This is related to the propaganda element of conflict reporting and thus its more war-oriented purpose. Many researchers point out that journalists rarely or very seldom present armed disputes in a neutral way (see Gamson et al., 1992; Ross, 2003), which is both noticeable in the case of conflicts in which their country takes part, as well as where they do not. Zelizer and Allan note that this is most noticeable in the first case when the journalists' state is at war (2002). Therefore, being personally involved in a given event can influence the journalist's actions and the role he plays, which in this situation may change from neutral observer to participant (see Tumber, 2004: 202; Russ-Mohl, 2013).

According to Rodgers, the journalist should "report the story, don't become it" (2012: 118–119), which means that the reporter should remain independent even when he might be a real victim of an event – as in the case of American journalists after the terrorist attacks on 9/11 (2012: 107). Being on the spot and observing an event and violence from the perspective of an eyewitness can also strongly influence the journalists' behavior (Knightley, 2003: 428), even if their country is not in fact at war (Bogdanov and Giergiel, 2007: 325). Barnes writes about the trauma of being an eyewitness to conflicts (2013), saying that this is one of the real threats not only to the journalist's own well-being, but also to the objectivity of his work. Seeing the research on how journalists are affected by conflict reporting and other traumatic events, one indeed gets the impression that trauma could have set its mark on the coverage (see Joelsing, 2010; Smith et al., 2015).

An important factor of conflict reporting is the visual images of the conflict, its parties and its consequences. Of course, technological development plays an important role in this. Nowadays, more and more content appears first on the internet, and it seems like the work of citizen journalists can affect the recipient even more because they are not usually censored in any way (Matheson and Allan, 2012: 130). Visual images of war not only say something about what the event is about and how it should be understood, but also call out the audience to take moral responsibility for what is happening (Chouliaraki, 2009: 521).

According to Iyengar and Simon, the media coverage of the Gulf War affected how people imagined that it could be brought to an end (1993). The survey conducted among media consumers showed that the people who often watched content involving military activities also opted for a military solution to the conflict (Iyengar and Simon, 1993). The coverage of this event took the form of a reality show running 24 hours per day, and the journalists decided the image of the war that the audience was presented with (Hedges, 2002: 142–143). That meant that the recipients were overwhelmed with materials from the battlefield, which could have affected how the whole war was perceived. Zelizer points to the fact that images can be used to increase sympathy toward the victims of the conflict – exemplified by the coverage of the Bosnian war – as well as increasing negative feelings toward “enemies” – like in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars (2004: 131). Information can also be manipulated by a dramatic sort of framing (Capeloa Gil, 2013: 34) – something that might be connected with sensationalism. Framing armed conflicts in a sensational way is commonplace (Yang Lai Fong, 2009: 19). However, for the purpose of my study it seems more interesting to explore how images can help recipients identify who is the aggressor and who is the victim of the conflict.

The demonizing and dehumanizing of the enemy is one of the most important elements of the conflict reporting (see Wolsfeld, 2004: 23; Galtung, 2006). Journalists can take a hostile approach to a perceived enemy not only in the case of disputes that concern the reporting country directly, but other conflicts as well – as can be seen in the Polish media’s coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. It seems that the concept of the enemy in war journalism can be defined in a symbolic or more factual way as an opponent on the front. However nowadays, for example due to hybrid conflicts, it is not clear how to define the front itself. Ottosen, when describing the coverage of four international disputes by the Norwegian media, refers to the dispositional enemy image (1995). This enemy is usually presented through negative national or religious stereotypes, and with linguistic and visual mechanisms that lead to this actor being demonized (1995: 101). The researcher exemplifies the dispositional enemy with the case of martial law in Poland, where Norwegian journalists were not critical against sources that confirmed their expectations – in this case that an invasion by the Soviets was impending (Ottosen, 1995: 102–103). They were disposed from the start to think that the Soviet Union would use military force against Poland, and so they neglected to apply proper criticism to those sources that only confirmed this view. McNair reached a similar conclusion when he examined the way in which the actions of the Soviet Union were portrayed by the British television news (1988). The

researcher found that in the media content there was a stereotypical and hostile attitude to the Soviets, as well recognizing their actions as threatening (McNair, 1988).

What is presented as hostile and threatening can be strongly marked by prejudices and stereotypes, which is noticeable in Poland's relations with the parties to the analyzed conflict, especially with Russia (Błuszkowski, 2003). Taras goes so far as to speak about hatred in the Polish-Russian relations, which in his opinion is the result of specific historical events (2015). In turn, Zabrowarny notes that although there is also hostility in the case of Polish-Ukrainian relations (2003: 15–17), it is not as bad as in the case of the relations with Russia. Therefore, it is possible that usage of hostile schemes by the Polish media in the course of presenting a dispute may be noticeable.

Wolsfeld, when writing about the role of ethnocentric factors in the reporting of armed conflicts, points out that the main purpose of the media is to brutalize one side and to show the suffering of the other, usually our, side (2004: 23). Everything depends on how “we” will be defined. It can be defined simply as our state, or more symbolically as a larger structure that the state is a part of, for example a civilization or an international or regional organization. This does not however change the fact that when the media show an armed conflict through the prism of “us” versus “them”, it may lead to news bias, which in war reporting seems like quite a common occurrence.

Carpentier says that the journalist is always located between two discourses – the enemy and the victim – which means that the parties to the dispute are usually evaluated on the basis of a dichotomy (2005). It is assumed that war journalism itself is dichotomous, because it presents the event as a zero-sum situation, as well as points out that only one side – usually “we” – is telling the truth (see Galtung, 2006; Ottosen, 2005). Sreedharan wrote about patriotism and national interest and its influence on the work of war correspondents (2013: 457). Ethnocentrism, which is one of the elements influencing international news flow (Galtung and Ruge, 1965: 67) may also affect war coverage through the prism of “us/victims” versus “them/enemies” at the national level. This is due to the fact that international or generally foreign media may also be involved in the nationalization of propaganda discourse, for example through overstated negativism towards the “enemy” actions or the personalization of threats (Nohrstedt et al., 2000).

The perception of the parties to the dispute in the above mentioned way is also something that concerns domestication. Domestication connects the coverage with the media system, and its role in war reporting will be elaborated on in the next subsection.

1.3.2 The domestication of conflicts

Domestication is a technique and media strategy relating to the way foreign events are covered by the national media (Hjarvard, 2001: 32). It means that the audience can understand and interpret it similarly as if the events would have been domestic (Riegert, 2011). Considering the fact that wars and armed conflicts can be counted among international events, it is obvious that domestication can also be used in their coverage – especially when the dispute concerns our country in some way and its parties are perceived in a specific way by us.

Olausson lists three types of domestication – (1) introverted domestication, which differentiates local (domestic) from the global; (2) extroverted domestication that combines local (domestic) with global; and (3) counter-domestication, which leads to deterritorialization and misses the local (domestic) reference (2013: 715). In the case of the third type of domestication, attention is paid to universal values shared by the majority of the world community. The researcher refers in this context to the existence of a global identity (Olausson, 2013: 720). The distinction between different types of domestication shows that it can be understood differently. However, in most of the studies on news domestication, attention is usually paid to elements that connect the analyzed event to the countries where the information about it is published. This is what the second type of domestication is all about, and it seems to meet the assumptions of this study.

Even if the foreign events covered by the domestic media do not concern the audience directly, they can start to be interested in them anyway. This is due to the fact that the recipient is able to notice a link between the described subject and himself or his country. Therefore, how information is valued plays an important role (Sumpter, 2009: 1003–1005). Increasing the level of interest in the issue may be possible on the basis of some kinds of connections and similarities. If such a connection is seen, the consumer decides to devote more time to absorb the information. According to Gurevitch et al., an element that has a major impact on the effectiveness of the described process is cultural, ideological and historical ties (1991: 195–216). These ties can result from a common historical experience or territorial location. Regionalism in the coverage is one of the factors that can determine the public interest in the presented issues. This is due to the fact that the audience is more interested in events that happen in neighboring countries or in the same geographical region (Lee et al., 2017: 905).

Similarities may also come from globalization (Lee, 2005), which is a process where economic and social links that have a transcontinental or interregional character are created (Held et al., 1999). The domestic media may be

interested in publishing information about countries that are economically or politically important to them in some way. Belonging to the same international organizations or having specific inter-state agreements are examples of such important connections. That it is why the political and economic connections resulting from globalization can serve to domesticate a certain issue. This may also be reflected in the global content presented by the national media, which in result can be glocalized – for example, through the translation of international information into national languages (Taradai, 2012: 21). In this way, the information is better understood by the recipient and consequently becomes closer to him.

Although the national media cover global topics, the perspective will always differ depending on who creates and presents the information (Gomez Rodriguez, 2007: 52). According to Thompson, how certain information is covered always depends on the specific socio-cultural or historical context (1995: 174). The journalist is part of the certain society and interprets events according to a certain system of values. Therefore, the same international event can be portrayed differently in different countries (Riegert, 2011: 172). In the case of domestication of global news, journalists use frames to shorten the distance between the recipient and the specific material. It is done by referencing the values shared in society and through cognitive schemes. In this way, information becomes understandable and relevant to the audience (Clausen, 2004), because they are able to understand and decode the message contained in the material (Taradai, 2012: 20). The process of decoding is therefore very important in the case of domestication. It helps in finding connections between the contexts used by the journalist and the presented event. If such connections are found, it has a particular effect on the recipient. Typically, this effect manifests itself in the form of commitment, and causes increased interest in the subject presented in the material.

According to Chyliński and Russ-Mohl, the public's understanding of the information and hence its validity is based on several key elements (2008). Even though the authors do not use the term itself, it seems that these factors can be seen as variables having to do with domestication. In their book, these variables are proximity, status and identification (2008: 126–130). In the case of these elements, attention shall be given to the geographical, political, cultural, social (personal) and emotional links (Chyliński and Russ-Mohl, 2008: 126–130). On this basis, the information is assessed by the recipient. The authors note that the value of the information is greater when it affects the recipients in some way and becomes essential for them (2008: 127). This is the case for both national as well as foreign information.

It seems, however, that generating interest in the consumers is more difficult when it comes to the coverage of foreign events – for example wars. On the other hand, some recipients might be interested in armed conflicts generally, even those that are not happening close to them. Of course, the interest in these events may be greater when the audience is able to identify some kind of connections to the described issue – for example economic or political relations with a state that is somehow involved in it – for example as a party to the dispute (Wasburn, 2002). It is important in this case to pay attention to related-oriented news factors, which determine the interest of the national media in covering international events. A good example of this type of relationship is when domestic military troops engage in foreign armed conflicts or peacekeeping missions – like Polish military being present in Afghanistan, Iraq and Mali as a part of interventions by NATO and the European Union. In the first two cases in particular, they were covered quite a lot in the Polish media, especially in the beginning (see Szmidt, 2007; Matuszak, 2014), because of the presence of Polish soldiers on the spot, but not only for that reason. These were concrete links to the events abroad, but in the case of domestication, the media also might refer to other – more symbolic – elements, such as a common set of values (see counter-domestication) or a common understanding of the “enemy”. Therefore, it seems important to pay attention to the mechanisms that can be used by the journalists to bring the event – especially wars and armed conflicts – closer to the audience.

Issues of a historical and cultural nature represent some of the most efficient domestication mechanisms, and can take the form of cognitive schemas (Goffman, 1974) that are useful in understanding information in a certain way. This is especially helpful in understanding the context of the events (Gurevitch et al., 1995). Referencing historical experiences, for example a specific event or entity, gives the situation a certain meaning. Gurevitch et al. says that one example of such a mechanism might be the Holocaust for Israelis (1995). The use of historical frames by a journalist may make the recipient able to automatically assign a specific characteristic to a given event. On this basis it will be possible to make a faster and unequivocal assessment. This can help to determine the proximity of the event – if it is connected to us or not. That is, whether there is a mutual historical fate between the covering state and the parties to the dispute or not.

Another important factor may also be if – according to the media – the conflict to some extent resembles other disputes, in which the covering state took part. On this basis it is possible to create a kind of emotional connection that may be associated with compassion or hatred. Therefore, historical frames can also be used by journalists to evaluate the actors involved through the prism

of “us” versus “them” or “victims” versus “enemies”. This is due to the fact that by referring to the past events in which the state covering the conflict was also a victim of the actions of one of the parties to the dispute, it is possible to appeal to the bond of having a common enemy. It seems that this is an important factor that can make the conflict more easily domesticated by journalists and that can increase social interest in the event and make it perceived as having similar importance as domestic events. Therefore, the effectiveness of such techniques can be strengthened by there being a real relationship between the country that uses domestication and the country which the information is about. It seems that such mechanisms can be visible in the case of the coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict by the Polish media. That is why domesticating military disputes by referring to history seems to be an important technique used by the media.

Taradai notes that the Ukrainian media used a comparison of the Battle of Tskhinvali to the Battle of Stalingrad to imply for the audience who the aggressor and who the victim was (2014: 74). In this way society was able to decode and assess both the actors and the incident. It seems that in this way – through the ability to understand the phenomenon and its origin, as well as the evaluation of individual actors – the audience may perceive the event as more relevant to them. However, it should be considered if the use of historical mechanisms by the media might distort the general opinion about the war, since references to historical experiences may result in specific – positive or negative – evaluations of the event and the actors involved. By only selecting negative examples, the content can become misleading and biased. Therefore, although historical factors are an important element of domestication, they can also be considered as one of the significant problems that the strategy produces.

Whether it is perceived as “our” or “their” dispute may also result from geographical location, security issues and emotions. It can be said that in the case of conflicts that take place near the borders of our country and which may have a real impact on our situation, domestication is not needed that much. However, Taradai, who studied the coverage of the conflict in South Ossetia in 2008 by the Ukrainian media, notes that a domestication of this dispute occurred (2014). This was partly due to the nature of the relations between Ukraine and the parties to the conflict. It was also associated with a fear of the conflict spreading to Ukrainian territory, and this was visible in the domestic coverage (Taradai, 2014: 77). Fear resulting from the media presenting a possible threat of war can actually make the audience more interested in the dispute, even if the recipients’ state is not involved in the conflict. That feeling may also be a result of domestication. Therefore, fear of the negative consequences of the dispute is one of the

dominant mechanisms that serve to determine whether the conflict will be considered as “ours” or not. Qadir and Alasuutari, who studied how the term “the war on terror” was domesticated by the Pakistani media, noted that journalists were trying to domesticate it by invoking political and economic consequences for the country which resulted from terrorism (2013: 585–586). On this basis, the media tried to indicate to consumers that the “war on terror” affects them directly. It seems that precisely through doing this – indicating an actual or potential impact of foreign events on our lives – the recipients may feel connected to the event. The possible impact of the conflict on the economic or military security of the domesticating state is therefore an important element of the strategy.

The authorities’ specific reactions to the existing situation – for example calling a government meeting to discuss possible scenarios of the conflict and their influence on the country – can also be used by journalists as a form of domestication of foreign activities. Recipients understand that if foreign actions, such as armed conflicts, require domestic politicians to take certain actions, it means that it concerns them as well. Also, frequently referencing domestic politicians’ experts’ or other domestic sources’ opinions about the event may elevate the sense of connection with it. If these actors speak about something, it is likely that it has some influence on the situation of the country. Therefore, the national or regional angle in the media coverage of international disputes may increase the effectiveness of the analyzed strategy (see Lee et al., 2017; Smolak, 2016a). It also shows how the external environment of the media system – political, economic or social – affects how national media cover foreign events. It may be that by presenting information on specific opinions or actions of political actors, the media – for example due to the level of political parallelism, which in the case of Poland is relatively high – may show support for the given entities, and also transmit their messages and certain perspective to the public. This is also noticeable in the case of the social impact on the journalists, who are members of a specific group, for example the nation. It may be that when domesticating and covering a given event, the media adopts an attitude based precisely on this group affiliation. That is why using domestication and making it “our” conflict may also be a problem concerning journalistic objectivity.

It is noted that giving an ethnocentric character to foreign warfare by closing the distance between the recipient and the conflict or between the journalist and the event, can reduce professionalism. According to Nossek (2004), the more the coverage has a domestic character, the less professional it is. This is due to the fact that the media identify important problems from the point of view of their own society. Therefore, focusing only on information that can be easily interpreted by the audience, for example in accordance with a national

value system, may blur the overall context of the event (Gans, 1979). Some elements may be omitted, because of their incompatibility with the accepted way of understanding the events. Moreover, the necessity of domesticating foreign news and finding links to the national community may make the journalist take only a partial view of the events.

The degree of emotional involvement in the topic can also limit professionalism (Qadir and Alasuutari, 2013: 695). The journalist may think that in some sense he is also a party to the dispute, because the event affects his country. It is possible that in this way the reporter may fail as a neutral observer, assuming that is what he is trying to be. On the other hand, through the links resulting from recognizing a war as “our”, supporting the actor with whom we are somehow connected seems obvious. Therefore, covering an armed conflict only from the perspective of one side – the one with whom we are linked – may lead to bias. A similar situation may also arise in the case of referring to the impact of an event on the state’s security. When the journalists define a threat it can be exaggerated – especially in the case of tabloid media – and it serves mainly to show a possible connection with an event. As a result, although pointing to the possible effects of an armed conflict on national security is important, it can also lead to a situation where the society will not be able to assess the event from a broader perspective.

Emotions – both connected with the aforementioned fear, as well as those involving, for example, compassion or hatred – comprise another factor that may condition the domestication of foreign events by journalists. Qadir and Alasuutari, while describing the coverage of the “war on terror” by the Pakistani media and how it was domesticated, also mentioned victimization (2013). The media portrayed the Pakistanis as victims of terrorism (Qadir and Alasuutari, 2013: 583). In this way, they sought to indicate that the “war on terror” was actually connected with their country, and the lives of citizens were at risk. Therefore, when examining the degree of domestication of a given conflict by the media, attention should also be paid to issues related to the possible suffering of victims, further reinforcing the information emotionally and psychologically.

Personalizing the story (Chyliński and Russ-Mohl, 2008: 130) by giving the tragic information a face may also make it more appealing to the recipient. On this basis it may be possible to identify both the problem and the person directly afflicted by it. In the case of war and similar events, being able to identify with the victim may make the recipient feel a strong bond with the portrayed person (Joye, 2015: 685). Joye stressed that strengthening domestication by appealing to emotion can be more effective when the victim of the event comes from the same country as the recipient (2015: 687). Then the distance between the audience and

the covered entity is further reduced. As a result, the degree of domestication of the event is greater. Moreover, when the citizens of our country are wounded or killed in a conflict, the authorities usually react to this situation somehow, and then it might become also “our conflict” (Smolak, 2016a) – due to the national angle. It is worth noting that by doing so – indicating that an international event may jeopardize the security of the citizens – there is in fact a possibility for the media to influence the actions of politicians (Entman, 2007). As a result, the link between the country and the phenomenon may be stronger. That is why, making content in such a way that it has an emotional impact on the audience seems to be one of the most effective mechanisms used by the media.

Joye describes the extent to which domestication of tragic events can influence public engagement (2015). He notes that the process of covering such events can have an impact on the emotions of consumers, including compassion for the “other” (2015: 692). Showing the suffering of people that we can identify with or with whom we are connected (Moeller, 1999), for example through a similar historical experience, can make us more engaged in their situation. Referring for example to the aggressive actions of an entity who is one of the parties to the conflict and who is perceived negatively by the domestic audience – because of past events – can invoke compassion and a sense of being a “victim” of this actor. Domestication can in that way be about defining and demonizing a common enemy, which as mentioned earlier is one of the key elements of conflict reporting. It can also make us devote more attention to assimilating information that relate to that kind of event, and we can also perceive it as similar to the national information. However, too much emotional involvement, resulting for example from the personalization of the story, or fear, is next to historical factors one of the significant problems of domestication. The perception of certain events or entities through the prism of feelings can make the judgment of these things misguided to some degree. That is to say, by recognizing these issues as important and directly related to us, we may not be able to assess the event and its consequences in an objective manner.

Another interesting issue arising from the use of domestication in the coverage of military conflicts, is when specific social values are referenced. The values shared by society can make the coverage of some issues characterized by a national perspective (Hjarvard, 2001). This is also an expression of domestication. Riegert examined the coverage of four foreign military operations, such as the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, by the Swedish Television (SVT) (1998). She noticed that the medium was more critical of the state considered as the aggressor than the BBC was (1998). The researcher points out that the differences resulted from discrepancies between the two countries in how they imagined the

resolution of those disputes (Riegert, 1998). Paying attention to specific elements of the conflict and giving them a certain socio-cultural context means that the public might become more interested in its course. However, it should be considered if interpreting foreign events through the journalist's national standards is appropriate. The nature of armed conflict is not always so simple. Therefore, attempting to evaluate these events in accordance with your own national value system can lead to bias (Gans, 1979). However, it seems that this is common practice when the media portray armed conflicts.

Making judgements through a certain cultural view can also be troublesome – for example, an evaluation that is based on the “Western” value system. This can lead to generalization. This is quite important, especially when it comes to conflicts in countries that do not belong to Western civilization or that are somewhere on the civilization's border. Interestingly, some kind of universalization by referring to the existence of a global or regional identity in the case of such conflicts may also be the result of the described strategy, which is defined by Olausson as counter-domestication (2013: 71). Therefore, universalization may, for example, arise from referring to the “Western” value system while covering a conflict. Citizens of a country that belongs to the Western civilization can then start to perceive the conflict as important to them (see Qadir and Alasuutari, 2013: 700) – especially when a group of countries, like the members of NATO or the European Union, get involved in resolving the dispute. This is similar to the case of Poland's and other members of the European Union's engagement in stabilizing the situation in Ukraine. It may make the recipient interested in the given event, which is important considering the possible social impact on the decision of political actors – especially in the context of a peaceful ending of a given dispute and minimizing the number of victims. However, giving importance to a foreign event only by a reference to the global or – like in the case of the conflict in Ukraine – a pan-European value system may still not make this event as important for the society as in the case of conflicts which are connected to the audience and their state directly. Therefore, it seems that in the case of covering the Russian-Ukrainian conflict by the Polish media, counter-domestication (Olausson, 2013) may be an additional option for the journalists, rather than their main method of domesticating the dispute.

The role of professed values and history in decoding the contexts used by journalists shows that domestication may be an unconscious process. It seems that it can be a very effective tool for manipulating consumers and their opinions about an event and its actors. Although a conflict might not directly affect a country, by referencing security, economy or other factors, journalists give people a reason to take more interest in this issue than might actually be

warranted. That is why domestication appears to be more effective in the case of regional events, because finding connections seems easier then. In the case of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict there are obvious connections to Poland, which makes it appear as not only an external conflict.

1.4 Analysis of earlier studies

The media coverage of warfare, as well as war journalism, is fairly extensively presented in scientific publications. This is particularly the case in the Anglo-Saxon countries. There the professional experience of war journalism is much more developed than in Poland. Therefore, foreign scholars give much more attention to this subject than domestic scientists. This in turn has an impact on the amount of earlier analyses that can be found devoted to the subject of my study.

The nature of the conflict – its hybridization and irregularity – means that the media coverage of it may differ from the coverage of other conflicts. It seems that the level of scientific interest in this subject should therefore be high. Indeed, many foreign analyzes devoted to this issue have been made, but only few have been done by Polish or Central and Eastern European scientists. One of the reasons for this may be the fact that this conflict is a relatively new event, which more or less intensively is still ongoing. Moreover, its hybridity makes the conflict difficult for a complete and reliable scientific analysis. On the other hand, the ability to determine how and by what mechanisms the media covered it seems very interesting, because of the impact of the external environment on the functioning of the media system. The level of politicization of certain media sectors, and their business models, can also affect the coverage. It was decided to present the overall results of previously conducted research about the examined subject. In that way it will be possible to check and compare the coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict by the Polish media in different periods of time. It will also be possible to check how the coverage of the event varied between the analyzed media outlets and the international ones.

While reviewing the research, only analyzes in Polish and English were included, due to my language capabilities. It might be problematic that studies made in other languages were left out, but accessing and understanding them would be very difficult or even impossible. That is why it was decided to omit them.

The international research devoted to the media coverage of the conflict in Ukraine was led for example by Roman, Wanta and Buniak (2017). They checked how events that occurred in Ukraine from April 2014 to March 2015 were covered and framed by the most popular Russian (Vremya by Channel

One Russia), Ukrainian (TSN by 1+1) and American (Nightly News by NBC) television news programs (2017: 364–365). The research focused for instance on how the dispute and sides of the conflict were defined. The analysis confirmed that the coverage of the situation in Ukraine depends on the opinions presented by domestic political actors and the involvement of the states in the conflict. Therefore, NBC showed the dispute in a relatively neutral way, while Russian and Ukrainian television programs showed mutual dislike in their content (Roman et al., 2017).

The book *Media and the Ukraine Crisis: Hybrid Media Practices and Narratives of Conflict (Global crises and the Media)* includes studies about the information management, the role of the internet – civic journalism and blogosphere – as well as the classical conflict coverage by Russian, Finnish, Estonian, German and Polish media, both in press and television (Pantti, 2016). This book is an important collection of research relating in almost a holistic way to the role of the media in presenting events in Ukraine. Importantly, the media coverage and framing of the conflict by Polish (*Polityka* and *Newsweek*), Russian (*Profil* and *Russkij Reporter*) and German (*Der Spiegel* and *Focus*) weekly political magazines, as well as the role of the media in acting as a link between political and social opinions, was also presented in the publication (Szostok et al., 2016). Analyzes conducted from April to May 2014 and from February to May 2015 showed that the Russian and German media demonstrated more interest in the events in Ukraine than Poland – the Polish media also covered Russia in the most negative way (Szostok et al., 2016). They indicated that this state is to blame for the dispute, and that perspective was a reflection of the current political and social views, as well as historical factors.

The media coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in the context of the ideological dispute between Russia and the West was also presented in the research. Boyd-Barrett drew attention to the narratives created by the American and British mainstream media about the causes of the dispute and actors taking part in it (2017). The author pointed out that the Western media's coverage of the conflict contained elements of hegemonic competition between Russia and the Western World – mainly the United States – thus producing propaganda against Russia (2017). This was manifested by a focus on Ukraine's will to join the European Union and NATO and demonizing Russia's role as a country attacking an independent state.

Pasitselska, by analyzing the coverage of the event by Russian TV stations – Channel One and Russia-1 – from November 2013 to the end March 2014, confirmed that the materials contained issues relating to ideological factors – “we” versus “they” (2017: 595). It was seen in the context of the United States and

Europe supporting Ukrainian revolutionary activities, which contributed to the close ties between Russia and Ukraine ending. The way the researcher paid attention to the ideological aspect of the conflict coverage, in particular going beyond the political or military understanding of the dispute in terms of civil war or inter-state conflict – is an interesting approach to problem analysis. However, in the case of the West-Russia relations this is not really surprising.

A similar research result to those made by Pasitselska (2017) and Boyd-Barrett (2017) was also presented by Finnish researchers who studied the coverage and framing (visual and textual) of the conflict from February 2014 to February 2015 – taking into account four specific events that occurred during this period, for example the MH17 catastrophe – by the German (*Die Welt*), Swedish (*Dagens Nyheter*), British (*The Guardian*) and Finnish (*Helsingin Sanomat*) media (see Ojala and Pantti, 2017; Ojala et al., 2017). It was shown that despite the national diversity of the analyzed media, pro-Ukrainian and pro-European geopolitical narratives prevailed in the coverage, while the actions of Russia and Putin were criticized, which was the result of the media belonging to the Western civilization. Because some of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, such as Poland, are rather influenced by Western civilization, it is possible that the references to the conflict of values described by Pasitselska (2017) and Boyd-Barrett (2017), was visible also in the coverage of the dispute by these states.

In turn, the domination of the pro-Russian perspective in the Russian media, especially television, as well as their propaganda function, was examined by Strovsky (2015). The researcher, referring to the coverage of the annexation of Crimea and Euromaidan, said that the media behaved as propagandists, reflecting only the Kremlin's views (2015). Therefore, the audience had access mainly to the official position of the government.

A comparative content analysis of quality newspapers from 13 countries such as: Albania, Czech Republic, Germany, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Ukraine and Russia, was carried out by a research team supervised by Fengler (2018). Two best-selling newspapers with different political angles per country were analyzed, and *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Rzeczpospolita* were chosen for the study in Poland. These two dailies were also chosen by me for my study. The project's analysis included four events which took place in Ukraine from February to May 2014 (Fengler et al., 2018) and showed that cultural and geographical proximity, as well as political and economic issues affected the coverage. International politics, and economy in the case of Poland, were the most frequently covered topics, and the Polish and German coverages were characterized by "high attention to the conflict" (Fengler et al., 2018). Therefore, it is possible to talk

about a domestication of the dispute by the media from certain countries. Russian political actors dominated the coverage and Russia was personified by Vladimir Putin (Fengler et al., 2018).

The online coverage of the situation in Ukraine was also the subject of foreign analyzes. The impact on the social perception of the dispute was addressed through studying the presentation of visual narratives, the personalization of journalistic content and the role of reporters. Having analyzed the Twitter accounts of several Western journalists and how they used photographs from the field, Pantti pointed to the three roles of reporters: 1) information interpreter – using images that illustrate the content; 2) moral agent – personalizing the message and instigating a moral discussion; 3) self-promotion – focusing on showing the reporting process more than the information itself (2017: 18). The role of foreign correspondents in showing the conflict on Twitter was also examined in the case of Finnish journalists. Ojala, Pantti and Kangas concluded that the reporters mainly used their accounts to emphasize their professional expertise and to interact with other correspondents – and in that way they act more like community-builder journalists than disseminators, interpreters or advocates (2018: 308–309). Both studies show that the role of journalists in conflict reporting is seen as similar despite the technological differences of working in traditional and social media.

Among the analyzes devoted to the coverage of the war in Donbass in social media – especially in the context of the presence and interpretation of visual frames – there were also studies dedicated to how the dispute was presented and understood in pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian communities on the Vkontakte portal (Makhortykh and Sydorova, 2017). The research carried out showed differences between the groups, and that the frames used on the internet could have been a reflection of information coming from the mainstream media. In addition, it was noted that frames with a negative angle – for example, presenting death – were more interesting to the users, and in particular to the pro-Russian side.

Although the main subject of my study is the media coverage of the conflict in Ukraine, it will also analyze the role of the journalists. Analyzes by foreign researchers, such as Pantti (2017), were about this aspect, but the Finnish researcher mainly looked at online media, and these will not be examined in this book. The role of the journalists in covering the Ukrainian dispute, both in national and regional television, press and internet media, was presented by Orlova (2016). After conducting 47 interviews with journalists from 42 Ukrainian media outlets, she showed that although the respondents were aware of the need to maintain objectivity, their emotional involvement in the event – which was manifested, for

example, in the underrepresentation of the pro-Russian point of view – could have influenced the coverage (2016: 19). Moreover, Orlova asked journalists about the professional standards, work pressure – external and internal – and their experience from working at the front (2016). From that she found out which factors could have affected the presentation of the dispute to the greatest extent.

Studies devoted to the media coverage of the conflict were usually conducted by foreign researchers, which is demonstrated by the analyzes described above. A lot of research has been done by Finnish researchers like Pantti and Ojala. Having checked how many studies on this subject has been carried out in Poland or about the Polish media in general, it was found that this type of work is scarce. The analyses which were made about this issue were usually related to the press and sometimes online coverage, rarely to television, which shows that there is a need to supplement the state of research. On the other hand, the earlier analyzes only look at a short part of the conflict – two or three months. Therefore, it is difficult to observe how the information about the dispute was made and for how long it was covered.

The research project “Polish press discourse on the conflict in Ukraine. Comparative perspective 2014–2015” conducted by the University of Warsaw, concerned the media coverage of the events in the Crimea in February and March 2014 and 2015. The study analyzed 50 newspapers – both daily newspapers and magazines – with the highest readership and sales (Laboratorium Badań Medioznawczych, 2017a: 4). The terms and metaphors used to describe the dispute were analyzed, because they could have a significant impact on how the event was perceived. Therefore, content analysis and narrative and discourse analysis were used in the study. On this basis it was possible to notice that the journalists perceived Russia in a negative way, and that they also did not devote that much attention to the causes and effects of the event (Laboratorium Badań Medioznawczych, 2017a). In that way the information might have been simplified. The historical references presented in the media reports were also analyzed. It was possible to observe to what extent these issues could have affected the coverage, which was also studied by Szostok et al., who examined how the dispute was described by Polish, German and Russian weekly political magazines (2016). Interestingly, the Warsaw Laboratory of Media Studies has also conducted other research on the dispute in Ukraine. This was devoted for example to the public perception of internet memes on the conflict and its parties (Laboratorium Badań Medioznawczych, 2017b), and the opinion of over 1 600 Polish respondents on given actors’ responsibility for the dispute and the credibility of the media coverage (Laboratorium Badań Medioznawczych, 2017c).

The coverage of the conflict in Ukraine by the Polish media was also examined as a part of an international research project organized by the Södertörn

University in Stockholm. “Ukraine 2014 – media war and the war in media” aimed to analyze the media coverage of the war from July to September 2014 in Poland, Sweden, Ukraine and Russia – including quality newspapers, tabloids and television news programs (Nygren and Hök, 2016). Due to the fact that this project is the methodological basis of my study, more detailed information about it is presented in the next chapter. However, it is worth noting that the project showed how the same event was covered by the four different countries in relation to the political regimes and journalistic cultures. It is so far the only international project concerning the dispute in Ukraine which includes how the conflict was covered by the Polish media. It is also the only project that describes the coverage of the conflict both by Polish newspapers and television, and which also includes in-depth interviews with the journalists who covered the events in Ukraine.

Among the studies on the conflict’s coverage by the Polish media, there were also analyzes of the three most popular Polish web portals – *Gazeta.pl*, *Onet.pl* and *Wp.pl* – from February to April 2014 (Smolak, 2017: 67). The content and frame analysis of the events in Ukraine – especially the Crimean crisis – showed that the most often presented issues were the causes and the course of the dispute, and the tone of the conflict was pro-Ukrainian. This is the inverse of the press coverage presented in the studies made by the Laboratory of Media Studies (2017a). This might indicate some differences in the coverage of the dispute between traditional and online media in Poland.

The earlier Polish and foreign studies dedicated to the media coverage of the conflict in Ukraine, showed that the scholars were often interested in different issues, used different methods, research units, research periods, and had different ways of defining the dispute. The greatest differences that have been shown are those between traditional and online media. This is mainly due to the kind of content and the mechanisms used by the journalists to describe the examined issue. It seems interesting in the future to analyze both media groups simultaneously. On the other hand, it is equally important to check how the different types of media covered the Ukrainian crisis during the same time period. This will allow a fuller picture of the analyzed coverage. It should be noted that the state of Polish research regarding the media coverage of the dispute is relatively incomplete and needs to be supplemented – especially in the field of television and online coverage, as well as the role of the journalists. This book aims to fill in some of these gaps.

Summary

The way of presenting wars and armed conflicts by the media can be marked by history, geopolitics, interstate relations or the level of political parallelism of

media organizations. Also the nature of the described event itself can strongly determine the process of acquiring and presenting information about the event by journalists. This is due to the fact that the hybridity of the conflict in Ukraine is manifested both by the conflict on the military and media fronts. Therefore, paying attention to this fact may, for example, allow to understand to what extent the two-dimensional aspect of the dispute conditioned the work of Polish journalists – especially in the context of the quotation and verification of the information sources used by them.

The reference to the Polish media system and its functioning also seemed important, because it may be one of the factors explaining the obtained results of empirical research – especially since the Polish media system, just like the conflict itself, has a hybrid character. Therefore, the way in which events in Ukraine can be covered may result from the relatively high political parallelism of some of the Polish media or their commercially-oriented activity, which will be checked in the next chapters of the book.

Finally, a reference to the theoretical aspect of the role of the media during the presentation of war activities – both to the coverage theory and the domestication strategy – allows to understand what factors could affect the journalists' interest in the analyzed in this book event, and how the media could shape information on this subject. For example, trying to reduce the gap between the recipient and the dispute. Also, the reference to external factors – including the influence of domestic and foreign political actors and the society – as well as the extent to which these elements may condition media action during conflict reporting, may help in understanding what was the role of Polish journalists during the coverage of events in Ukraine.

2 Research methodology

The following chapter presents the methodology on which the results of the analysis described in the book are based. Attention will be focused on the description and characteristics of the research methods and tools used in the study, the selection of research material as well as the problems resulting from it and attempts to solve them. The applied tools and research methods will be used to answer the research questions and hypotheses, which will also be presented in this part of the study. Moreover, I will refer to the research project “Ukraine 2014 – media war and the war in the media”, which is an important part of the methodology of the conducted research. However, it should be noted that my participation in this project meant that I had an influence on the choice of methodology and research tools used in the analysis, and I was one of the persons responsible for conducting the research.

2.1 The theme, subject and aim of the research

The coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict by the Polish media will be analyzed. It seems very important to show how the Polish media present the Ukrainian issue and at the same time whether and to what extent media discourse can influence political or social discourse and vice versa. The argument for writing about this topic is the fact that there is not much research devoted to the media coverage of this event made by Polish scholars. This is due to the fact that the war in Ukraine is a relatively new event, which is still underway. Therefore, the opportunity to examine the role of the media in it seems to be important and interesting.

The subject of the study are issues related to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, which were presented by the Polish journalists from national daily newspapers, that is tabloids and quality newspapers, as well as from television news programs. Attention will be given to how specific issues were covered, sources of information were used, the conflict was defined, as well as the way the parties to the conflict were presented. The subject of the study also includes the Polish journalists who covered the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. These journalists will be examined in terms of their role in the conflict and their level of work autonomy. This will be helpful in understanding the real causes and contexts connected with the coverage of the conflict by the chosen media in a certain way.

The aim of the study is to describe how the Russian-Ukrainian conflict was covered by the Polish media in 2014 and 2015 and to conclude if the fear of it spreading to Poland, as well as historical and cultural patterns, influenced the coverage. The purpose of the study is also to check if the crisis in Ukraine was domesticated by the Polish media. This seems to be interesting, especially due to the proximity of the conflict. Both newspapers and television programs will be analyzed to see if the Polish media spoke with one voice during the coverage of the conflict in Ukraine. Another possibility would be that differences resulting from the medium's editorial line, the type of media, and the degree of relations with political actors affected the perspective of the dispute visible in the materials. This study will go a long way in explaining the importance of this conflict to the Polish media and society. That is to say, how much space and attention the media paid to the war in Ukraine. This event had a direct impact on the military and economic security of Poland. Therefore it seems to be important to check what kind of perspective – pro-Ukrainian or pro-Russian – was shown in the analyzed materials. It should be noted that Poland's political and historical relations with the parties to the conflict are ambiguous. It can therefore be expected that the perception of the actors that are involved in the conflict by the Polish media will be marked by these patterns.

2.2 The scope of the research

It was decided that the research period will cover thirteen months, from 1st of March 2014 to 31st of March 2015. It was decided that the beginning of the analysis will cover events after the escape of Viktor Yanukovych from Ukraine and the beginning of the Crimean crisis. Its completion will be over a year later, which will allow capturing the most important events of the conflict, such as the war in Donbass, MH17 plane crash, and the signing of an agreement of settling the conflict in Donbass (Minsk II). In addition, the analysis carried out for this book showed that at the end of the research period, that is the end of March 2015, the number of materials devoted to the conflict began to decrease (see Fig. 2.2), which may be connected with a drop in general interest in the situation in Ukraine by the media. It also indicates that the selection of research period was correct.

It was decided to include six Polish media outlets in the study. The media selection criteria remained almost the same as in the project “Ukraine 2014 – media war and the war in media”, which will be described in the later part of this chapter. Attention has been paid to the most popular quality newspapers and tabloids, and to television news programs. The editorial line and level of political

parallelism were not important factors in this case. Due to the choice to analyze newspapers and television, it was possible to notice differences in how the conflict was covered, not only between media that make different types of content, but also between the media outlets that belong to the same group. Paying attention to mainstream media is also important considering their range and the high likelihood of them having an influence on the public opinion. Therefore, two issues were considered when choosing media to be analyzed. First, sales and viewership, as well as the ability to influence public opinion and the content of other media, which was checked by taking into account research about the most influential media in Poland in 2014 and 2015, carried out by the Institute of Media Monitoring. Thanks to these distinctions, two tabloids, *Fakt* and *Super Express* two daily newspapers – *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Rzeczpospolita*, as well as two TV news bulletins, *Wiadomości TVP1* and *Fakty TVN* qualified for the analysis. Interestingly, the selected tabloids were at the top of the sales list of national dailies in 2014 (324 730 copies sold) and 2015 (307 474 copies sold) (Kurdupski, 2016a). Right behind them on the third position was *Gazeta Wyborcza* with sales of 152 041 in 2014 and 144 592 copies in 2015 (Kurdupski, 2016a). *Rzeczpospolita* was in fact on the eighth place in general and on the fourth position among the opinion dailies (Kurdupski, 2016a). Considering that *Rzeczpospolita* sold more copies (55 849 in 2014 and 55 886 in 2015) than the two daily newspapers *Gazeta Polska Codziennie* and *Gazeta Prawna*, despite them being ranked higher than *Rzeczpospolita*, it was decided to include the daily in the study (Kurdupski, 2016a). It seems that the differences in the location of the dailies in the ranking resulted from the balance between the number of newspapers prepared for sale and the number of unsold newspapers. This balance was larger in the case of *Rzeczpospolita* than *Gazeta Prawna* and *Gazeta Polska Codziennie*. However, *Rzeczpospolita* sold more copies in the analyzed period and thus the range of this newspaper was higher than the two other dailies. This is important from the point of view of domestication, because the scope of a medium and thus its ability to reach a large audience with its message can increase the effectiveness of the strategy.

The viewership of the TV news programs in 2014 and 2015 showed that the differences between the main editions of the news programs produced by the public (*Wiadomości TVP1* at 19:30) and private broadcasters (*Fakty TVN* at 19:00, or *Wydarzenia Polsat* at 18:10) is small (Kurdupski, 2016b). Of course, the differences appear at the level of general viewership (age 4+) and also in the age group 16–49 years old. Differences are also dependent on which viewer measurement metrics are used, for example, AMR or SHR (Kurdupski, 2016b). Audience viewership research confirms that the TV news programs selected for

the analysis belonged to the most frequently watched TV news broadcasts during the research period. In the case of general viewership (age 4+), the differences in the share of the television audience (SHR) were up to one percentage point in 2015, and were almost the same in 2014 (Kurdupski, 2016b). Wiadomości TVP1 was watched by 25.7 percent in 2014 and 24.55 percent of people in 2015, and Fakty TVN by 25.66 percent in 2014 and 23.39 percent of total audience in 2015 (Kurdupski, 2016b). Therefore, it is considered that the outlets chosen for analysis are appropriate. In addition, the possibility of comparing content presented by public and private broadcasters, whose degree of dependence on political actors and decisions differ, may give interesting answers on how they chose to cover the same conflict.

The research by the Institute of Media Monitoring confirms that the selected quality newspapers were at the top of the list of the most quoted media in the analyzed period (*Najbardziej opiniotwórcze...*, 2014 and 2015). The study, carried out from January to December, included only quotations in the press, radio and television. internet quotations were not checked. Therefore, it is possible that the results including internet quotations could have differed somewhat. However, taking into account the results by the Institute of Media Monitoring, it should be noted that in 2014 *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Rzeczpospolita* were ranked second and third among the most quoted media in Poland (*Najbardziej opiniotwórcze...*, 2014). In turn, in 2015 *Gazeta Wyborcza* was on the first and *Rzeczpospolita* on the second position on the list (Instytut Monitoringu Mediów, 2015). This means that these newspapers had a big impact on other media, and thereby also the opinions of readers of these media. In the case of tabloids, in 2014 and 2015, *Fakt* was ranked on the 9th place. *Super Express* held the 15th position in 2014, while in 2015 it had already taken the 11th place, ahead of the weekly magazine *Polityka*, which is considered as one of the leading socio-political weeklies in Poland (*Najbardziej opiniotwórcze...*, 2014). In conclusion, the tabloid media quotations in the analyzed period was five or six times lower than quality newspapers, but these newspapers were in this respect higher than the tested TV stations. Of course, it is worth noting that in the case of influential TV channels, entire stations were evaluated without dividing them into individual programs. In 2014, the ranking of the most influential TV channels was as follows: TVN24 (2276), TVN (956), TVP Info (637), TVP1 (334) and TVP2 (199) (Instytut Monitoringu Mediów, 2014). Differences in the number of quotations seem to be considerable, however, it should be remembered that these stations belong to two owners, namely the Polish Television and the TVN Group. Therefore, the interchangeability of journalists and topics between these channels is quite smooth. That is why it often happens that the same content

presented on TVN24 is also presented on TVN. A similar situation takes place in the case of TVP Info and the first and second TVP channels. In 2015, the ranking of citations was as follows: TVN24 (3126), TVN (1515), TVPInfo (971), Polsat News (503), TV Republika (440) (*Najbardziej opiniotwórcze ...*, 2015). As can be seen, TVN's channels were still on the first two positions. Also, TVP Info took the same place as the year before. However, TVP1 and TVP2 were not included in that year's ranking.

The rankings of the most influential media in Poland at the turn of 2014 and 2015, together with the sales and viewership show that choosing the six media outlets seems appropriate. This is due to the fact that these outlets are not only the most popular television programs and press dailies in the country and thus, they had the largest audience, but they also affected the agenda of other media. Therefore, it seems that they could have a great effect on the media and social discourse about the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, especially since the type of ownership and the level of political parallelism might also influence the coverage.

Tabloids do not give a clear support to any political side, because of the nature of the medium itself, and in the case of *Fakt* it might also be a result of the ownership. The owner of *Fakt* is the German-Swiss publishing company Ringier Axel Springer Poland. It can be assumed that foreign ownership affects the political neutrality of the medium, but as mentioned earlier, there are outlets owned by foreign companies that are not neutral. The analyzed quality newspapers and television news programs are also not impartial. *Gazeta Wyborcza* from the beginning of its existence has been associated with the Solidarity movement (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2011b: 132), and today its editorial line has a centro-left character (Mielczarek, 2007: 92). *Rzeczpospolita* was considered a conservative newspaper (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2011b: 141), however it seems that now the daily is more center or center-right oriented (Jaspal et al., 2014: 254). Both quality newspapers and *Super Express* remain in the hands of Polish owners, although by 2011 the State Treasury owned 49 percent of shares in *Rzeczpospolita* (Konopka, 2013: 107). Therefore, the possibility of influence from political actors on media content could have been greater in the past. In the case of TVP and TVN, the issues of political sympathies are also clear. TVP as a public broadcaster is dependent on the state, although it should theoretically operate independently. However, after every change of government, the Public Media becomes the political prey of the ruling party, which has an influence on the selection of governing bodies of both radio and television (Oleszkiewicz, 2013: 194–195), and as a consequence also on journalists. The owner of TVN is the American group Scripps Network Interactive, which in March, 2018 was sold to the media group Discovery Communications

(*Discovery...*, 2018). Therefore, the degree of political parallelism can be considered as medium, for example the support of any political party is conditional (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2007: 43). It is noted that TVN supports the Civic Platform and other opposition parties. This is interesting, since during the research period the Civic Platform was in power, and the presidential election campaign was ongoing. Therefore, the conflict in Ukraine could have been the subject of political discussion in Poland at that time, especially concerning possible military support for Ukraine.

2.3 Research hypotheses and research questions

The following research hypotheses will be tested in the study:

H1: An anti-Russian perspective is dominant in the Polish media coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

H2: Stressing the threat to the economic and military security of Poland was the dominant tool of domestication of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict by the Polish media.

In order to confirm or falsify these research hypotheses, it was decided to create eleven research questions.

The main research questions:

RQ1: What are the similarities and differences between the media in how they framed the Russian-Ukrainian conflict?

RQ2: What kind of perspective, pro-Ukrainian or pro-Russian, was dominant in the media coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict?

RQ3: Is domestication of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict visible in the Polish media?

RQ4: Do the analyzed materials contain information about how the conflict in Ukraine affects the political, military and economic security of Poland?

RQ5: To what extent did historical and cultural factors affect the coverage of the conflict by Polish media?

RQ6: How do journalists assess their own role in covering the Russian-Ukrainian conflict?

Specific research questions:

RQ7: What kinds of specific mechanisms were used by the Polish media in the domestication of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict?

RQ8: How were the parties to the conflict portrayed?

RQ9: To what extent did fear of Russian expansion affect the coverage of the conflict?

RQ10: What specific issues were mostly presented in the analyzed media?

RQ11: What kinds of sources of information occurred most frequently in the analyzed media and why?

Getting answers for those research questions will help to determine how the Russian-Ukrainian conflict was covered and domesticated by the Polish media and what factors affected the actions of journalists.

2.4 The research project “Ukraine 2014 – media war and the war in media”

This study was inspired by and based on the international research project “Ukraine 2014 – media war and the war in media”, which was carried out from 2014 to 2016 and was financed by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency. The project was organized by Södertörn University in Stockholm, Sweden, and its coordinator was Nygren. Coordinators of the research teams in the other countries were Głowacki from the University of Warsaw, Kiria from the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, Taradai and Orlova from the Mohyla School of Journalism in Kiev. The project aimed to analyze the media coverage of the war in Ukraine in the summer of 2014. Poland, Russia, Sweden and Ukraine took part in the research. Thanks to that it was possible to observe how countries which are different from each other at the level of political regime, journalistic culture and attitude towards the analyzed issues, presented the Ukrainian conflict in the media. It is worth noting that it was decided to analyze the presentation of the conflict by mainstream media, because it was recognized that this kind of media has the greatest impact on the formation of public discourse (Nygren et al., 2016: 4).

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used in the research. The main research method was a quantitative content analysis, which was combined with semi-structured interviews with journalists who covered the conflict (Nygren and Hök, 2016: 56). The hybridization of research techniques and methods allowed for a more in-depth understanding of the investigated subject and its context. Another method is a comparative analysis. According to Dobek-Ostrowska and Sobera, the comparative analysis should also be included among the hybrid methods, which is the effect of its flexibility, that it is of both quantitative and qualitative character (2017: 30). On the one hand, the use of the comparative analysis allowed to show differences in the coverage between press and television, and tabloid and quality media. On the other hand, it helped to understand how the same conflict is seen and understood in four different countries. As a result, it was possible to show how the biggest media from the selected countries perceive the Ukrainian conflict and its impact on these countries. This is particularly important, both for the Russian and Ukrainian media, due to the conflictual character of their relationship, but it is also important in the case of the Polish media, since the conflict had a significant impact on the functioning of the country. Therefore, applying the mentioned methods and techniques in the case of the international research project seems appropriate and understandable.

The methods and tools used in the analysis were helpful in obtaining answers to the created research questions (Nygren, 2016a: 23):

- RQ1: How is the conflict framed in the mainstream media? (For example, how is the enemy portrayed? which words are used in the description of what is happening? How are the main events in the conflict described?)
- RQ2: Which patterns can be seen in the use of sources in the different countries? (For example, who are allowed to speak and how are different types of sources handled? How do different forms of disinformation appear, and how do the journalists handle source criticism?)
- RQ3: How do the journalists see their own role in the conflict? (For example, do they take sides or are they neutral observers? How is the journalists' work affected by threats to their security or by conditions that limit their work?)

The research questions are connected, both with the mechanisms used by the media selected for the analysis, as well as the behavior of journalists when covering the conflict.

Due to the fact that the subject of interest of the researchers participating in the project was the way the conflict in Ukraine was covered by mainstream media, it was decided that three types of traditional media will be included in the research. It was decided to analyze the most popular tabloids, quality newspapers and television news programs. Therefore, the following media from the analyzed countries qualified for the research: *Aftonbladet*, *Dagens Nyheter*, SVT-Rapport (Sweden); *Komsomolskaja Pravda*, *Kommersant*, Channel 1 (Russia); *Den*, *Segodnya*, Channel 1+1 (Ukraine); *Fakt*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Wiadomości TVP (Poland) (Nygren, 2016a: 27). The content analysis included materials related to the conflict in Ukraine, which appeared in the chosen media from July 10 to September 6, 2014. It was decided to choose this research period, because of the intensity of military actions during this time, and the ceasefire agreement signed between the parties to the conflict on September 5, 2014 (Nygren et al., 2016: 4). The analysis did not include debates and editorials (Nygren et al., 2016: 5). It should be noted that only five materials were coded per day, including the first five materials in the case of newspapers and television. Doing so made it possible to limit the number of analyzed items. In the case of the printed media, pictures and texts were analyzed together. 1 875 materials in total were analyzed (Nygren et al., 2016: 5), and 325 of them were published by Polish media (see Fig. 2.1) (Smolak, 2016a: 33). Most of the materials appeared in *Gazeta Wyborcza* (see Fig. 2.1). Also in Sweden, the most material was published in the quality newspaper, while TV materials dominated the Russian and Ukrainian coverage (Nygren, 2016a: 27).

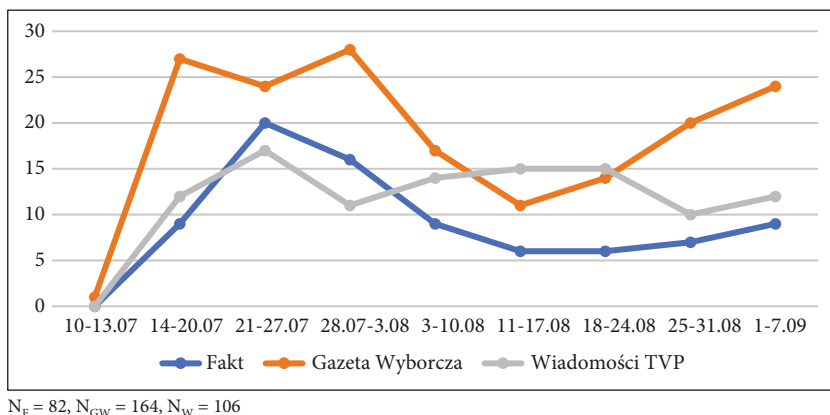


Fig. 2.1: *The media coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict by the Polish media in 2014 (in numbers)*

Source: Author; Smolak (2016a: 33).

Press and television materials were analyzed based on a code book consisting of 37 variables (see Appendix no. 2). Attention was paid to such issues as dominant topic and sources. Frames visible in the coverage were also taking into consideration. The code book included questions about the main perspective of the material, visible contexts and language used to describe the situation in Ukraine and parties to the conflict (Nygren et al., 2016: 4). Detailed attention was also paid to such events as the disaster of the Malaysian airplane MH17 and the presence of Russian troops in Ukraine. The interest in these certain topics came from the selected research period, as well as the importance of those issues for media.

In the research, 32 in-depth interviews with journalists and members of editorial boards from media who covered the war in Ukraine were also made. In the case of Poland, six interviews were conducted, Swedish researchers made five interviews, four interviews were conducted with journalists from Russia (only two interviews with journalists from the analyzed media), and 17 interviews were made in Ukraine (Nygren, 2016a: 28). The interviews had a semi-structured form which means that researchers had a list of areas, questions that they had to discuss with the media representatives (see Appendix no. 4). The journalists were asked about such issues as professional experience, a sense of autonomy while covering the dispute, security, criticism of sources and disinformation, and the role of the journalist in the conflict (Smolak, 2016a: 34). Due to the form of interviewing, it was possible to ask additional questions, which is undoubtedly

a great advantage of semi-structured interviews. It is assumed that most of the conducted interviews were face-to-face interviews, but no recommendations were imposed on researchers in this regard.

The results of the research showed that historical and cultural issues had an important role in the coverage of the conflict in Ukraine, which was especially evident in the case of Ukrainian, Polish and Russian media (Smolak, 2016a: 42). For example, the analysis showed that the coverage of the war by the Polish media outlets was characterized by support for Ukraine and fear of Russian actions (Głowacki and Smolak, 2016: 156–158). The coverage in the Russian and Ukrainian media had a patriotic dimension and was characterized by mutual negativism, which is obviously the result of the involvement of these states in the dispute (Nygren, 2016b: 29). The Swedish media presented the conflict in the most neutral way of all of the analyzed countries. However, the coverage was still more pro-Ukrainian than pro-Russian (Nygren et al., 2016: 16). The finds from the content analysis were also confirmed during interviews with journalists.

One of the results of the project was also a model created by Nygren, which describes the conditions of media during the coverage of conflicts (2016: 15). When creating the model, he relied on Hanitzsch's research on journalistic cultures (2007), and distinguished between neutral and partisan journalism (Nygren, 2016a: 24). Nygren also paid attention to the level of political and military control over media, dividing it into a strong and weak one (2016a: 24). On this basis he described the conditions of journalists in this dispute. He considered Russia as having a high political control over media and partisan journalism (Nygren et al., 2016: 15). In Ukraine and Poland, partisan journalism was also visible, but the role of the state was rated lower than in Russia (Nygren et al., 2016: 15). Poland was considered as relatively free from political control. Sweden had neutral journalism and weak political control over media (Nygren et al., 2016: 15).

The described research project in which I took part is the methodological and thematic basis for further reflection on the media coverage of the conflict in Ukraine, but only and exclusively by the Polish media. The research tools created for the media analysis of the conflict by researchers from Poland, Russia, Sweden and Ukraine will serve, although in a slightly modified form, in the analysis conducted in my study. It should be emphasized that I was the person responsible for carrying out and analyzing materials on the coverage of the dispute by the Polish media in the project. I was also involved in the choice and testing of the research tools. Therefore, I had knowledge about their usefulness and the potential need for modifications for future analyzes. In the methodological chapter of my book I explain the differences between my study and the project

“Ukraine 2014 – media war and the war in media” in terms of aim and research tools. In this way, readers will be able to assess the degree of independence of my research from the project in which I participated. A detailed description of the applied methods and techniques, along with the changes made therein, will be presented in the following subsections.

2.5 Research methods and tools

The study will present the results of the empirical research where both qualitative and quantitative methods and tools were used. A hybridization of methods – combining quantitative and qualitative methods – was also used.

The main research method is the content analysis, which was used to quantitatively and qualitatively examine press and TV materials about the war in Ukraine, published by six Polish mainstream media in 2014 and 2015. It is supplemented by semi-structured in-depth interviews with journalists working in the selected media and who covered the conflict from March 2014 to March 2015. Comparative analysis also found its application in the study, both in the case of the content analysis and the analysis of the results of the in-depth interviews. Desk research, which is usually defined as a research technique, was used when referring to the reports made by the Centre for Public Opinion Research.

2.5.1 Content analysis

Content analysis is the main research method used in this study. Although it is considered to be a strictly quantitative tool (Lisowska-Magdziarz, 2004: 21), when it is combined with elements of frame analysis it takes on a hybrid character (Dobek-Ostrowska and Sobera, 2017: 29). Such a combination was used for this study. The code book created originally for the research project “Ukraine 2014 – media war and the war in media”, and later modified by me, contains both qualitative and quantitative elements (see Appendix no. 2). This is due to the fact that the creators of the project, in which I took part, also wanted to examine qualitative elements – that is, frames visible in the media coverage. The same goal was set when developing the research tool that will be used for my analysis. Therefore it was not only possible to answer the question if something was presented in the research items – for example a given issue or a source of information (see for example RQ10 and RQ11) – but also how it was presented – especially in terms of attributes given to specific issues and entities (see for example RQ1 and RQ8).

All kinds of materials were analyzed except for debates and editorials, as set out in the project. It was decided to not set a limit of five analyzed materials per

day, which was the case in the international research project. Thanks to that, it was possible to observe and present the real intensity of the coverage of the war by the Polish media (see Fig. 2.2). The selection of research units was based on the content referring to the topic of my study – the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Due to the fact that paper versions of the examined press titles were analyzed, it was necessary to review full editions of the chosen newspapers in detail, which excluded searching for articles based on selected key words. In the case of television materials it was likewise necessary to view full editions of news programs in order to find materials regarding the conflict in Ukraine.

The research tool used for the content analysis was a code book created for the research project “Ukraine 2014 – media war and the war in media”. However, the code book had to be modified to fit the topic of the study. The code book used in the study consists of six parts: General Information, Analysis, MH17 (catastrophe), Russian Troop, Framing and Language. This is the same structure as for the original code book. The names of the parts seem to be clear and indicate the nature of the questions that are assigned below them (see Appendix no. 1 and no. 2). Two events, MH17 (catastrophe) and Russian Troops, were chosen to pay special attention to. This is mainly a result of the selected research period for the international project. However, the materials that have been analyzed in my study cover a four times greater period, which takes into account both the time of the disaster and the beginning of the Russian military presence in Crimea, with the appearance of the “little green men”. That is why it was decided to not remove these sections. However, the data obtained regarding these two specific cases – in particular the MH17 plane crash – were not fully used in this study. This could be considered as a limitation of the research tool, although it could not be assumed from the beginning that the mentioned issues would not dominate the coverage, especially since one of the research questions is dedicated to specific issues visible in the materials (see RQ10).

The code book consists of 38 questions with single and multiple choice variables. Beside the questions related to sources of information and history, the vast majority of variables require one dominant answer (see Appendix no. 1). In this way, it was tried to give transparency to the research. I realize that for some questions, narrowing the answer to one dominant issue can be a limitation for the study. On the other hand, due to the size of collected material (see Fig. 2.2), such a solution seems to be reasonable, because it is still possible to present general trends that are visible in the coverage. One of the significant changes made to the original code book (see Appendix no. 1) was the addition of variables and questions that referred directly to Poland. For example, modifications were made to questions about dominant themes, actors visible in the material, and

sources of information. Some elements, due to the international character of the project “Ukraine 2014 – media war and the war in media”, have been omitted or standardized. For example, instead of Polish or Swedish sources of information, the list included representatives of the European Union. The revised version of the code book contains references to Polish political actors, experts, representatives of the army and citizens. The list of topics was also changed by adding “Consequences of the conflict for Poland” and types of support given by Poland to Ukraine (see Appendix no. 1). The code book also contains questions related to the concrete consequences of the dispute for Poland, how Poland should react and what role Poland plays in the dispute (see Appendix no. 1). A question about conflict scenarios presented by the media has also been added. Among the possible scenarios that are important from the point of view of the Polish audience, a transition of the conflict beyond the Ukrainian borders, and economic war, have been taken into account. Another important change was to draw attention to historical contexts used by journalists (see Appendix no. 1). If there are references to historical contexts – for example, a comparison of the situation in Ukraine to other past wars and armed conflicts, or references to events connecting Poland with the parties to the dispute – it seems to be worth noting. This shows, to what extent journalists who described the conflict tried to give context to the coverage. The use of historical references or references to the consequences of the dispute for Poland, for example its economic or military security, indicates to the recipient how to read and understand the materials. These factors are interesting to study, because of the popularity of the media chosen for the analysis and their role in the creation of public discourse.

An important element of the code book is also the reference to the causes, nature and naming of the dispute and parties to the conflict. It is equally important to refer to the geopolitical and historical contexts visible in the coverage (see Appendix no. 1). According to Krippendorff, taking into account the contexts of both the information and the used terms is important in the case of content analysis (2013: 88–89). To focus only on the quantitative layer of content analysis narrows the possibility of understanding and explaining the observed tendencies, which seems crucial in the case of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict (Dobek-Ostrowska and Sobera, 2017: 29). Therefore, it was decided to construct and modify a code book so that it allows for a more detailed understanding of the trends presented by the media, especially in the context of their bias towards one of the parties to the conflict which is connected with the first research hypothesis. It should be noted that the modification of the code book prepared for the project “Ukraine 2014 - media war and the war in media” meant that research materials from *Fakt*, *Gazeta Wyborcza* newspapers and *Wiadomości*

TVP1 had to be analyzed a second time. The possibility of using the results obtained for the project in my studies was therefore limited.

While the quantitative nature of content analysis allows for relatively objective research (Neuendorf, 2002: 1), the frame analysis is more subjective. The researcher determines whether the given frame is actually present in the material or not. The ability to read certain frames requires some knowledge about contexts, history, and language that allows decoding information in the right way. That is why in the case of the frame analysis, which complements the content analysis, it is very important to adapt the code book to a specific reality (Smolak, 2017: 66). Remaining objective is also problematic when asking questions about the tone of the coverage and attributes given to actors, and thus the general perspective of the coverage. Although it was tried to conduct the analysis in a completely impartial way, I am aware that being completely neutral might sometimes be problematic. It seems to be even more difficult, when values given by a journalist to certain entities or subjects may have a so-called second bottom (Sobera, 2017: 83). That is why it was necessary to conduct in-depth interviews with journalists to explain the real motives of their actions while covering the conflict. In the case of questions about the perspective or tone of the coverage, it was tried to take into account phrases used by journalists, or the nature of the described event. I realize that a good solution in this respect would be to use discourse analysis, but the size of the research material made this very difficult.

Another important issue of choosing content analysis as the main research method is the research period in which six Polish media outlets were examined. It was decided that the research period would cover just over a year, from 1st of March 2014 to 31st of March 2015. In this time, 1 726 materials from all six media were chosen to be analyzed (see Fig. 2.2). The most information on the conflict appeared in *Gazeta Wyborcza* (438), while *Fakt* had the least (170) (see Fig. 2.2). A total of 527 materials about the dispute were presented in TV (see Fig. 2.2).

Interestingly, the amount of interest in specific events that took place during the time period seems to be similar in all of the analyzed media. The figure showing the life cycle of the conflict-related materials reveals three growth phases during the research period – from April to June and from June to October 2014, as well as from January to March 2015 (see Fig. 2.2). The first growth phase is connected with the beginning of the Donbass war and the Ukrainian government's launch of its anti-terrorist operation (ATO) against the separatist oblasts in Luhansk and Donetsk, as well as the Ukrainian presidential election in May. The second growth phase includes further fighting between the Ukrainian army and separatists, the shooting down of MH17, the signing of the Minsk protocol and the signing by President Poroshenko of the ratification of the Ukraine Association Agreement

with the European Union. The last of the growth phases involves the signing of the Minsk Agreement on the Ceasefire (Minsk II) in February 2015 by the presidents of Russia, Ukraine, France and the German chancellor. Importantly, most of materials about the conflict appeared between July and August 2014, which might be result of the MH17 catastrophe, which occurred on July 17 that year. The material published in this time period accounted for about 30 percent of the whole research material.

The three growth phases appearing almost at the same time in all media shows that the selection of the research period, and of the research units, was correct (see Fig. 2.2). There are some differences between the outlets, but this is the result of the general amount of information devoted to the war in Ukraine and the character of the certain medium.

Analyzing six media outlets which covered the conflict in Ukraine during the same time period, allows for the use of another research method – comparative analysis. The comparative analysis is a supplementary method of content analysis, where significant differences in the media coverage between the research units are observed. The use of comparative analysis in this case seems to be a good solution, especially since this method is very often combined with content analysis (see Sadaf, 2011; David et al., 2017). It seems obvious, especially when more than one medium is included in the study. The media selection for this study was based on popularity, and not on such elements as political parallelism or ownership. However, these factors can still affect how the information about the conflict will be presented. Therefore, the opportunity to compare how different media have covered the Ukrainian issue seems to be particularly interesting. Moreover, the model of media actions during the coverage of the conflict made by Nygren based on the results of the project “Ukraine 2014 – media war and the war in media” will also be taken into account (Nygren, 2016a: 261). It will be possible to check if the model looks the same in the case of the bigger number of analyzed media and an extended research period. The use of content analysis and supplementing it with in-depth interviews with journalists will be helpful.

2.5.2 In-depth interviews with journalists

The content analysis used in the study quite often, especially in the case of media research, requires the use of a complementary tool, which in this case are in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews are also used to complement results of surveys, which allow to obtain general quantitative information, but omits the qualitative dimension, that is, the reasons for a given situation or tendencies

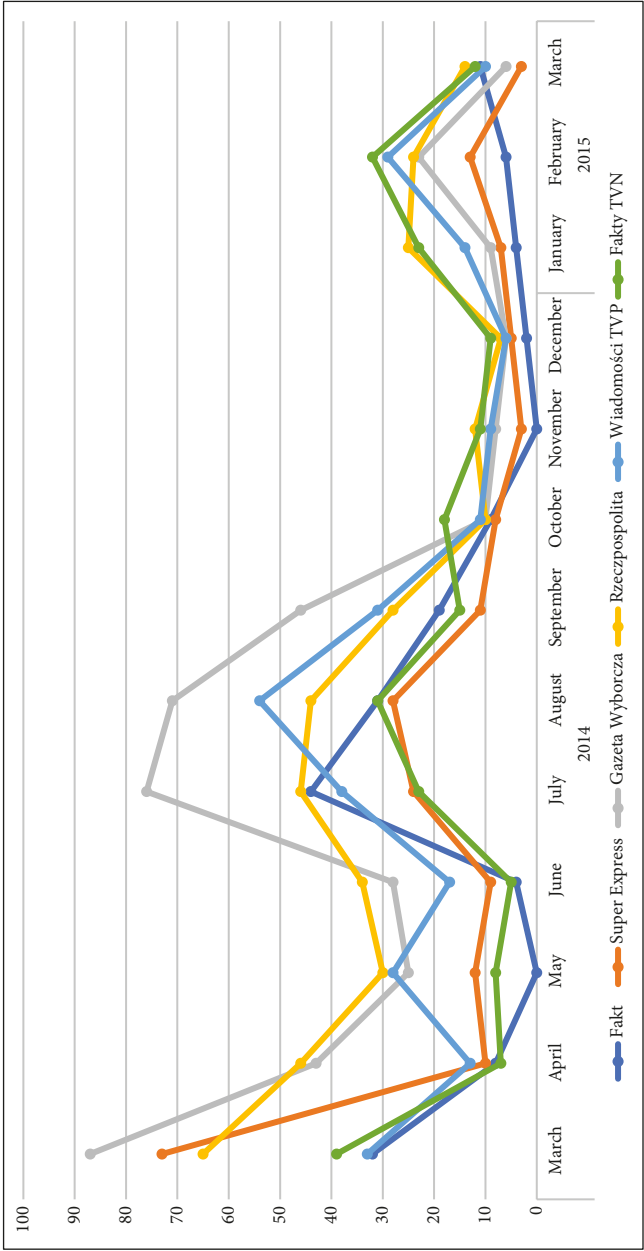


Fig. 2.2: The life cycle of news/materials dedicated to the conflict (in numbers)
Source: Author.

(see Dobek-Ostrowska and Sobera, 2017: 29; Kvale 2010: 43). Therefore, it was decided that using only the content analysis, despite its both quantitative and qualitative nature, would be insufficient in the case of this study. It was also necessary to conduct in-depth interviews with journalists from the six Polish media outlets, who produced information on the dispute in the analyzed period – from March, 2014 to March, 2015.

It was decided that two interviews will be conducted with journalists from each of the media outlets due to the number of journalists who described the war in Ukraine. In the case of printed media, there were usually the same people, for example three or four journalists, who worked for the foreign and political department. An equally important determinant was the presence of journalists in Ukraine, which in the case of some of the media selected for analysis was very difficult. For mainly economic reasons, media owners have stopped sending journalists abroad, for example in the region of armed conflict. While in the case of television, for both TVP and TVN, there were several correspondents working in Ukraine during the analyzed period. In the case of printed media, one can speak of no more than one permanent correspondent who was on the spot. This was the case, for example, in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, whose correspondent in Eastern Ukraine was Piotr Andrusieczko. In an article made for the magazine *Press* concerning the lack of Polish correspondents in Ukraine, the author cites the words of one of the journalists of *Tygodnik Powszechny*, Wojciech Pięciak, who said that not sending Polish journalists to Ukraine for financial reasons is provincial (Wyszyńska, 2015). This opinion is quite controversial, but it does not change the fact that indeed the number of journalists who covered the conflict in Ukraine, on the spot, was low. In the period of the Crimean crisis, or even during the Euromaidan Revolution, the number of journalists from Poland seemed to be larger, and in the later period the situation was slightly different. This has been confirmed during interviews with journalists. It is worth noting that works by freelancers such as Paweł Pieniążek, who worked in the conflict zone, were used by Polish media. Also people who are experts in the field of Eastern Europe, especially scientists who were in Ukraine in 2014 and 2015, commented on the situation in Ukraine for media that did not have their own correspondents in Ukraine. The situation was that many journalists wrote about Ukraine from their offices in Warsaw. The journalists were asked about the impact of these working conditions on the quality of their coverage of Ukraine during in-depth interviews.

An equally important element affecting the number of journalists working in the conflict zone was security. Piotr Kraśko, the head of Wiadomości TVP1 during the analyzed period, called the situation in Ukraine and its impact on the

security of journalists a “death lottery” (Wyszyńska, 2015). Therefore the number of journalists from mainstream media who wrote about Ukraine in 2014 and 2015 was limited. That is one of the reasons why it was difficult finding respondents for this study. Another difficulty with conducting in-depth interviews with journalists is that some of them refused to take a part in the study or failed to respond on requests for participation. In addition, particularly in the case of tabloids, identifying the actual authors behind the texts was difficult. Most of the journalists who wrote for *Fakt* or *Super Express* used pseudonyms. Only a few authors used their full name, and it was decided to conduct interviews with these journalists. An equally important issue is the increasingly common practice of using external experts, for example politicians, researchers, or army representatives, who make journalistic content and commentaries for the media, including those chosen for this analysis. The possibility of reaching directly to journalists thereby narrows down even more. On the other hand, the use of such experts may indicate a desire from the publishers to improve the quality of their content, especially concerning international issues, including armed conflicts.

I conducted eleven interviews with journalists who covered the conflict in Ukraine in 2014 and 2015. Ten of them worked for the analyzed media outlets. It is worth mentioning, that one of these ten respondents cooperated with both tabloid and quality newspapers in the research period. Therefore, he could refer to work experience in both types of media organizations. The eleventh interview was conducted with a journalist outside the analyzed media. The reasons for including him in the study anyway were his work experience as a war correspondent, and the fact that he was in Ukraine close to the fighting area during this study's time period. I would like to point out that six of the eleven in-depth interviews with journalists used in my research were carried out for the project “Ukraine 2014 - media war and the war in media”. Due to the amount and content of the collected research material, as well as the purpose and subject of my analyzes, few of the fragments used in the report from the international project were used by me again in this study.

The conducted interviews were semi-structured, same as in the case of the research project “Ukraine 2014 – media war and the war in media”. There was a group of problems and questions that all journalists were asked about, and some additional issues were also addressed. As in the case of the code book used for the content analysis, the in-depth interviews were expanded in some areas, such as historical factors and their influence on the coverage, the journalists' opinions about the perspective visible in national media, and the reasons for the media's and society's interest in the conflict (see Appendix no. 3). When conducting an unstructured or semi-structured interview, particular attention is paid to the

possibility of obtaining additional information about the examined problems, which results, for example, from the description of issues or events relevant to the respondent (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 2001: 251–252). In the case of the interviews conducted for the purpose of this research, such a strategy proved to be very helpful, since the journalists quite often referred to their own experiences or the experiences of their colleagues from other media, in order to provide more detailed information about the discussed topic. For example, when they were asked about how their Polish origin affected the willingness of the parties to the conflict to speak to them. In addition, in semi-structured interviews one can ask additional questions to the respondents, especially when the certain problem turns out to be very interesting for the researcher (Anderson, 2012: 303). That is why the length of the interviews and the amount of questions that the journalists were asked about differed.

The interviews were conducted from April 2015 to January 2018. They were conducted in Polish, however, some of the fragments that were found to be particularly useful for this study have been translated into English. The conversations were mostly carried out face-to-face or by phone. One of the interviews was made by using the program Skype, because one of the journalists was in Ukraine at that time. There were, of course, some limitations resulting from making the interviews over such a long time period. Some journalists were not able to fully identify the mechanisms they used while covering the conflict. However, it seems that most of them, especially those who worked on the spot, or who are interested in Eastern Europe and often write about it, answered in detail to the questions being asked. The long period of making interviews resulted from the necessity of first finishing the content analysis, thereby making it possible to refer to the results of the analysis during the interviews.

As mentioned earlier, the interviews were conducted in a variety of ways – by phone or by using a Skype program. Most of the interviews were conducted in an individual form, meaning face-to-face conversation with the journalist. Thanks to this, the control of the interview seemed higher (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 2001: 255) than in the case of using telephone or Skype. Another advantage of individual interviews, according to Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2001: 254), is the higher percentage of received responses, but this trend was not observed in the case of the other two forms of obtaining information from journalists. The telephone interview turned out to be a good solution especially for those journalists who did not have time to meet and be interviewed in person. This was done four times. However, this is nothing surprising, because the journalists who took part in the research are employees of the mainstream media. Their time for meeting with the researcher was thereby

limited. Of course, one of the characteristics of a telephone interview is its duration. In the case of the telephone conversations, they usually lasted from 25 to 40 minutes, whereas in the case of personal interviews it took more time. The face-to-face interviews lasted from 40 minutes to as long as two hours. It seems that despite the shorter duration of the telephone interviews, their quality is comparable to those carried out in person. Of course, the opportunity to observe the respondents behavior in relation to the asked question was difficult, but hearing the tone of the respondent's voice or laughter also allowed for assessing the journalists' reaction to the discussed issues. Paying attention to body language when conducting interviews is very important, because it allows the researcher to understand the real feelings of the respondent, especially in a situation where he or she does not want to fully or not at all answer a question. The journalists who were interviewed for this study did not avoid answering any of the questions. However, at certain moments, paralanguage was an important element that strengthened the reaction of the respondents, especially when they talked about their contacts with the parties to the dispute.

Despite some journalists agreeing to disclose their names when using fragments of their statements in the study, it was decided to let the respondents remain anonymous. In that way it was possible to ensure a homogeneous research structure and also take into account the ethics of conducting interviews (Kvale 2010: 60). The only disclosed information about the journalists is their gender, age range and working place.

2.5.3 Desk research

Desk research is a research technique that is quite often used within the field of social sciences, especially in public opinion and social policies studies (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 2001: 324–325). It can supplement the state of knowledge about a given issue when the researcher lacks time or resources to conduct additional research herself (Johnston, 2014: 619). Indeed, I did not have the opportunity to conduct opinion polls on the conflict in Ukraine. This also is not the subject of the research. Moreover, using studies made by other people has its limitations, for instance that the variables are not adapted in the way that the researcher would prefer, as the studies were made for a different purpose (Bednarowska, 2015). However, it was decided to apply desk study by analyzing reports made by the Centre for Public Opinion Research. It seemed that these reports could help in some sense to understand the mechanisms used by the media – especially in the context of the second research hypothesis.

The reports were made based on CAPI interviews. The first one was carried out in November 2014 on a sample of 934 people (Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, 2014). The second one was published in June 2015 on a sample of 1 011 people, but the research described there was carried out in 2014 (Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, 2015). It was a representative random sample of adult inhabitants of Poland. The used reports relate to the impact of the conflict in Ukraine on the security of Poland. The report from 2014 refers to the State Security Assessment and was commissioned by the National Security Office. An important issue that has been highlighted is the perception of internal and external threats by citizens, including those related to the activities of Russia and the situation in Ukraine (Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, 2014). Importantly, the study was carried out after the announcement of the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland, which includes references to the situation in Ukraine and the Russian intervention in that country (Legucka, 2015: 143). Therefore, it is possible to check to what extent political discourse coincides with social discourse and later with the media discourse. The report from 2015 also refers to the situation in Ukraine and includes the risk assessment for Poland from February 2014 to April 2015, which includes the research period of my study (Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, 2015).

Using these reports made by the Centre for Public Opinion Research seems to be interesting for the purpose of comparing media discourse and social discourse, which as mentioned earlier is important particularly in the case of the second research hypothesis. This is due to the fact that journalists who want to domesticate an event must also take into account the societal attitudes to that given issue (see Sumpter, 2009; Gurevitch et al., 1991). However, the reports do not refer to recipients of certain media, but to representatives of the society in general. It should be noted that in Poland there are not many institutions, or perhaps none whatsoever, that study media audiences and their attitudes toward certain issues. The analyzed media do not carry out such analyzes either, and if they do, they focus on a very small time period or a very specific issue. It was, therefore, impossible to make use of such reports. That is why it was considered that the reports made by the Centre for Public Opinion Research will be used only as an additional technique in the study, without the need to create hypotheses or research questions dedicated to these data. This does not change the fact that these reports may be helpful in understanding the mechanisms used by media, which are part of society and therefore perceive certain issues in a specific way, for example, due to historical conditions or national stereotypes.

3 The analysis of the conflict's coverage

This chapter will present the results of the content analysis and the in-depth interviews with journalists. Attention will be paid to the choice and presentation of topics, sources of information used, how the conflict is defined and the perspective of the coverage. On this basis it will be possible to determine the differences between the analyzed media and how journalists assess their role when writing about the dispute.

3.1 Dominant issues and sources

The media's selection of issues and quotations of specific sources may affect the perception of the material and the whole event in question. Journalists who covered the situation in Ukraine were asked whether they were free to choose topics, or if it was imposed on them by the editor or owner. They were also asked about access to sources of information and difficulties in that regard. Along with the results of the content analysis, it will be possible to describe how the media have dealt with these issues.

3.1.1 Covered topics

The importance of an issue for the media is often manifested in the intensity of its coverage (Yarchi et al., 2017). In the case of covering foreign events, this factor seems even more important, because journalists usually consider them less newsworthy than national news (Hepp et al., 2016). When it comes to armed conflicts, the media's interest in them may result from, for example, their rare occurrence (Galtung and Ruge, 1965).

During the 13 month research period, from March 1, 2014 to March 31, 2015 – 1 726 research units on the conflict appeared in the analyzed media. The television news programs are broadcast every day, while the newspapers are published from Monday to Saturday. Consequently, the amount of information that appeared in the newspapers was in that way limited in relation to the television programs. For comparison, the most news about the dispute – in terms of time – appeared in Wiadomości TVP1, which may be due to the nature of the medium itself. The program broadcast information about the dispute for 196 days, which shows that on average more than one news story was published daily. Fakty TVN similarly covered the event for 164 days. *Gazeta Wyborcza* presented information for 197 days, *Rzeczpospolita* for 177, *Super Express* for

110 days and *Fakt* for 98 days. In the case of the press, almost two news items per day were published on average, which indicates that the conflict had a high priority on the media's agenda. News on the dispute was not published every day, and the intensity of the coverage was often dependent on specific events (see Fig. 2.2). However, the story appeared in the media almost every month, and it seems that in this way the recipient could follow on a regular basis what was happening in Ukraine.

Over 607 newspaper pages¹ and 25 hours in total of analyzed television news programs were devoted to the coverage of the conflict. This displays a relatively high level of Polish media interest in the conflict. It should be noted that differences at the level of the amount of newspaper pages or the length of television news programs could have influenced the amount, and thus the importance of information provided by the media on a certain topic.

In the case of tabloids, the number of pages in each issue varies from 34 to 40 pages, and in the case of quality newspapers from 36 up to 48 pages. The tabloids are rather similar in how many pages they write per issue, while *Rzeczpospolita* usually has more pages than *Gazeta Wyborcza*. Therefore, it seems interesting to check what information was published on the covers and full pages, as this may indicate the relevance of the issue.

The method of archiving Fakty TVN made it impossible to check the position of the news segments in the structure of the program. Therefore, time was the element to measure. The length of Wiadomości TVP1 is usually 30 minutes long, and Fakty TVN is 27 minutes. The three minutes of difference between the programs may or may not be a factor that significantly influenced the amount of time spent on Ukraine. It seems more important to check what the average time of the news items was.

The difference between tabloids and quality newspapers was 255 pages. Tabloids devoted 176 pages to the conflict, and 101 were full pages. Most of the information took quarter of page. In the case of quality newspapers, the total number of pages on Ukraine was 431. Most of the information about the dispute was published on a half of a page, and 194 pages were entirely devoted to events in the Eastern Europe.

Fifteen hours of information on the conflict were presented by Wiadomości TVP1 and 10 hours of materials appeared in Fakty TVN. The average time of

1 The total amount of pages was summed up based on the space that it took to describe a certain issue. That is, full page, half page, quarter of a page and less than quarter were all combined to give a total number of pages.

one segment was comparable in both media. In the case of Wiadomości TVP1 it was 186 seconds, and 158 seconds in the case of Fakty TVN. However, it is worth noting that the difference of over 20 seconds may be significant, because some of the analyzed units were not longer than that.

The amount of material produced by each individual medium, as well as its structure, for example the number of pages and length of time, could have influenced the reception of the information by the recipients. Referencing these data was meant to show that although the amount of material was mainly taken into account when determining the importance of the event, its location and length is equally significant.

The media's interest in a foreign event may have to do with event-oriented and context-oriented factors (see Shoemaker and Cohen, 2006; Zerback and Holzleitner, 2018). It seems that in the case of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, its newsworthiness for the Polish media can be assessed both through the prism of event-oriented factors – like the dispute's hybridity – as well as context-oriented factors – like the relations with Russia and Ukraine and the territorial proximity to the conflict. One of these groups of factors might be more emphasized, however, because of how the national media system functions and the influence of its external environment. It seems important to find out which of these two groups of factors had the greatest impact on how the conflict was presented – something that can be, for example, seen through the most often covered topics.

Based on the results of the content analysis, it was possible to distinguish 18 topics that were covered in the media (see Tab. 3.1). Among them were issues related to the actions of the European Union and NATO representatives, the course of the conflict and actions of actors involved in it, the MH17 catastrophe, and the role of Poland in the dispute. These specific events stand out because of what went on during the research period. Despite the structure of the material, it was possible to indicate the dominant topic of the coverage, by taking into account the amount of material on the issues.

The three topics most commonly presented by the analyzed media were international political discussion and sanctions (23 %), consequences of the conflict for Poland (12 %) and Russian military involvement in the conflict (10 %). The differences between the most frequently presented issue and the other two are significant, which may indicate its importance. NATO intervention in Ukraine (1 %) and economic and political support for Ukraine from Poland (1 %) were the least frequently covered topics (see Tab. 3.1).

Tab. 3.1: *Dominant themes in the coverage (in percent).*

	<i>Fakt</i>	<i>Super Express</i>	<i>Gazeta Wyborcza</i>	<i>Rzeczpospolita</i>	Wiadomości TVP1	Fakty TVN	Total
International political discussion and sanctions	5	14	25	31	23	21	23
NATO intervention	1	0	1	3	0	1	1
Military actions in the conflict area	5	2	9	8	16	5	8
Consequences for civilians in the conflict area	1	1	2	1	2	6	2
Pro-Russian rebels and their actions	7	3	6	1	4	4	4
Russian involvement (in general)	2	5	8	6	3	3	5
Russian military involvement in the conflict	11	10	13	12	4	9	10
Military support for Ukraine from Poland	3	3	1	1	2	3	2
Economic and political support for Ukraine from Poland	2	1	0	1	1	1	1
MH17	14	11	7	3	5	4	6
Consequences of the conflict for Poland	27	19	5	8	14	10	12
Relations between Poland and parties to the conflict	4	4	2	5	4	2	3
Negotiations and peace agreements	4	4	4	5	8	5	5
Russian humanitarian convoy	2	1	1	1	4	4	2
Stories on Ukrainian military (not fighting)	1	3	3	1	2	5	2
Annexation of Crimea and its consequences	3	9	5	5	3	3	5
Stories on the Ukrainian government	0	1	1	2	2	3	2
Other	8	9	8	6	3	11	7
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N =	170	206	438	385	294	233	1726

Source: Author

The role of Poland and the Polish perspective were important elements of the coverage, especially in the context of the two most frequently presented issues. This is due to the fact that Poland is a member of international organizations. Therefore it is assumed that it agrees with proposals for conflict resolution presented by these entities. On the other hand, the close relations with Ukraine, as well as the dispute's influence on Poland, could also have shaped the media coverage. Therefore it seems that the context-oriented factors may have been quite significant for the coverage. The way they are used and the amount of news they concerned seems to be dependent on the character of the medium and the kind of content it presents (see Tab. 3.1).

Political discussion and sanctions was the most important subject for quality media, including both newspapers and television news programs (see Tab. 3.1). This may be due to the fact that such materials may include analyzes and estimations regarding the impact of the sanctions on the European Union members and Russia. This opinion seems to be confirmed by the interviewed journalist from *Gazeta Wyborcza*, who claims that although human stories are the most interesting for an ordinary reader, the profile of the newspaper also requires presenting other types of information:

“*Gazeta Wyborcza* is a newspaper which must inform about what is happening. So it is impossible to escape from such analytics, from what is happening in the political world in Ukraine.” [R5]

The focus on political issues was reflected in the cover article from March 2014, devoted to both the political and economic isolation of Moscow by the United States and the European Union. The article's headline, “Resist Putin” (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, 05/03/2014), is the American Secretary of State John Kerry's answer to a military presence of Russia in Ukraine. During Kerry's visit in Kiev he talked about Russia breaking international law in Crimea and demanded full cooperation between the Kremlin and the OSCE observers (see Picture 3.1). At the same time he gave his full support to the Ukrainian authorities, which the picture illustrated.



Picture 3.1: “Resist Putin”.

Source: *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 05/03/2014

Picture 3.2: “Kremlin is preparing for sanctions”.

Source: *Rzeczpospolita*, 17/03/2014

The media profile was also significant in the case of *Rzeczpospolita*. It specializes in economic issues, and so focusing on sanctions and their consequences is not surprising. This medium wrote about these issues most often (31 %). The article entitled “Kremlin is preparing for sanctions” (17/03/2014) describes the actions of Russian companies and oligarchs, who were forced to withdraw their financial assets from the West (see Picture 3.2). A similar activity was also observed in the case of Western investors. An interesting way of illustrating the information is the picture of Putin and Medvedev looking concerned, while they were forced to face the consequences of their decisions about the Crimea. When comparing pictures one and two, it can quite clearly be seen that they are a kind of visual frames which serve to strengthen the message of the texts (D’Angelo and Kuypers, 2010: 251) and give them a clearly anti-Russian and at the same time pro-Ukrainian context. This is especially interesting from the point of view of the first research hypothesis. It also shows that despite the differences between the media outlets – for instance the level of political parallelism – both quality newspapers used similar mechanisms and perspectives when pointing to Russia’s responsibility for the conflict.

Equally interesting is the article “Getting harder against the Kremlin” (*Rzeczpospolita*, 18/03/2014). A preview of the article was placed on the first page of the newspaper on March 18, 2014, which may indicate its importance. The article is about the European Union imposing further sanctions on Russian politicians. The author of the article also mentions that similar actions

were taken by the United States. The photograph attached to the article shows the then Minister of Foreign Affairs Radosław Sikorski, who is talking to Catherine Ashton. Poland's role in imposing economic and political sanctions on Russia is emphasized, which is another example of context-oriented factors influencing the covered topics – Gross and Kopper (2011) included political and economic relations to these elements. Furthermore, it should be remembered that in 2014, Russia put an embargo on Polish fruits and vegetables in response to decisions of European Union, as well as Poland's support for Ukraine. Therefore the Polish angle was also significant at the international level.

Importantly, international political discussion and sanctions was the most frequently presented topic on the covers, especially by *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Rzeczpospolita* (both 19 times). Only once did the subject appear on the cover of a tabloid – *Fakt*. However, it accounted for eight percent of all information on the conflict that appeared on the covers. Moreover, 113.5 pages in quality newspapers and 14.5 pages in tabloids concerned this issue, which is 21 percent of the total number of pages about the conflict.

Television also devoted the most attention to this topic. International political discussion and sanctions were presented for three hours in total by Wiadomości TVP1 and one and a half hours by Fakty TVN. This shows that there might be a correlation between the number of units devoted to certain topics, and their importance for the media.

The consequences of the conflict for Poland were especially emphasized in the tabloid coverage. This shows that these media used context-oriented factors differently than quality media, which more often wrote about “political discussion and sanctions” (see Tab. 3.1), focusing more on international than regional relations. Both *Fakt* (27 %) and *Super Express* (19 %) considered the consequences of the dispute for Poland to be the most important issue. The national perspective was thereby even more visible in the coverage, because in this way journalists referred directly to the influence of the event on the country. The interviewed journalist from *Super Express* stated that paying attention to these elements is more important when covering issues from abroad:

“When we create materials about foreign affairs, the Polish angle always appears somewhere, so the reader can be aware of the consequences for Poland (...). I think that from reader's perspective it was extremely important.” [R3]

Proximity, understood more broadly than just territorial closeness, is an important news factor (Chyliński and Russ-Mohl, 2008). Although in the case

of the second most covered issue it was rather connected with its negativity, since the media mostly presented the negative consequences of the dispute. According to Galtung and Ruge (1965) negativity is one of the main factors of newsworthiness. Such a result does not seem surprising when taking into account the character of the examined media. Tabloid journalists writing about consequences of the dispute for Poland, referred to emotional factors such as fear. In the case of the impact of the conflict for Poland, it could attract social interest. One such issue was the direct military threat, which was pointed out by a *Fakt* journalist, when speaking about the causes of social and media interest in the dispute:

“While the revolution was interesting, because something historical is happening around us, it went to a higher level when the Crimea and Donbass began, because questions about ourselves were being raised, and what threatens us in fact.” [R1]

Fear of the conflict transferring to Poland was also connected with Russia's military involvement in Ukraine. The *Super Express* journalist said that this element, for example due to history, could have conditioned the increased interest of the audience:

“It was happening close to Poland. It's obvious that Ukraine was not a threat to us. Perhaps Russia's expansion in Ukraine always was a threat, and the question was – what's next?” [R3]

The threat of Russia's expansion could have gained the Poles' interest, especially those who are readers of tabloid media, but not only them. This is due to the fact that Poles perceive Russia as the “enemy” (Taras, 2015), and the negativity of the coverage may be directly connected with certain actions of this country. A good example of such rhetoric is a cover of *Fakt* published in March after Sergey Aksyonov announced that Crimea wanted to be a part of Russia. The cover presents the question: “Will Poland be next?” (see Picture 3.3). The question was formulated in this way because of the Russian occupation of Crimea and the beginning of disarming Ukrainian soldiers in the area. This information was also presented on the cover. Prime Minister Donald Tusk is also quoted. He said that the conflict in Ukraine is “to be or not to be for Poland” (*Fakt*, 03/03/2014). He mentions that “we must modernize the army” and that “the military intervention of Russia in Ukraine is a threat to our borders” (*Fakt*, 03/03/2014). Presenting such information on the cover may suggest to the reader that Russia's military activities in Ukraine may indeed cross over to Poland.



Picture 3.3: “Will Poland be next?”

Source: Fakt, 03/03/2014



Picture 3.4: “We will sweep Poland from the earth!”

Source: Super Express, 12/08/2014

A similar tone was presented by *Super Express* (see Picture 3.4). The headline “We will sweep Poland from the earth!” refers to the words of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy for *Rossiya 24* (*Super Express*, 12/08/2014). The politician warns that in the case of an outbreak of the Third World War, Poland and the Baltic States will be destroyed. The article also contains historic references to the First and Second World War and the role of Russian and Soviet leaders in how they began, which are clearly context-oriented factors. Vladimir Zhirinovskiy’s words do not give a realistic description of the situation, but for the ordinary reader it may sound disturbing. The use of such historical frames can further strengthen the fear among recipients, which was confirmed by Taradai, when writing about the role of historical factors in the Ukrainian media’s domestication of the conflict in South Ossetia (2014). Of course, Russian expansion is not the only consequence for Poland, but it seems that the use of such rhetoric by the media intensified public interest in the conflict.

The presented examples show that the national consequences of the conflict appeared both on the covers (13 % of materials), and the whole or half pages of tabloids. Tabloids devoted a total of 41.5 pages to this issue, and quality newspapers 30.5 pages. It was placed nine times in total on the covers of *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Rzeczpospolita*. Television news talked about it for three hours

and 25 minutes, with two hours of materials published by the TVP. This shows that public media, probably due to dependence on political actors, hence due to the *raison d'état*, had to devote more attention to this issue than private broadcasters.

The media mechanisms of bringing the conflict closer to the Polish recipient will be discussed in detail in the next empirical chapter.

Russia's military involvement in Ukraine was the third most frequently discussed topic. It was more important for quality newspapers (25 % of materials in total) and tabloids (21 % of materials in total) than TV news programs (13 % of materials in total) (see Tab. 3.1). This might be due to the fact that the genres used by journalists in tabloids and quality newspapers can have more opinion character than those used in TV news programs. Additionally, in the case of tabloids, it might not always be necessary to use information that is fully verified (Newman and Fletcher, 2017: 26). Moreover, journalists from quality newspapers who wrote about Russia's military involvement could rely on their own analyzes and knowledge – for example, when they explained the context of the conflict to the recipients. Moreover, the military presence of Russia in Ukraine covered by the tabloids may be related to sensationalism and for example strengthening the fear among the audience. Especially in the context of a Polish-Russian war – which was mentioned as a possibility.

Worth noting is that the fact of a Russian military presence in Ukraine for some time was uncertain, and the Kremlin denied it. This may be the reason why Wiadomości TVP1 and Fakty TVN published less materials on this subject compared to other media. In the case of television, they tried to present photographic evidence of Russian presence in Eastern Ukraine, to prove to the viewer that Russian forces and equipment were indeed there. In this way, visual factors and frames could have played an important role in shaping the image of the parties to the conflict. According to Zelizer, images can create sympathy or aversion toward actors involved in armed conflict (2004: 131). Aversion is usually directed against the aggressor, and Russia can easily be perceived as that when taking into account the fact of its military involvement in the events in Ukraine (see Picture 3.5).

Segments broadcast by Fakty TVN in August 2014 showed how Russian heavy military equipment was being transported across the Ukrainian border near the areas controlled by separatists. During the two-minute segment the journalist discussed Russian military involvement in the region and claims that such activities took place very often. Similar information was also presented in other materials made by TVN.



Picture 3.5: “*The journalist shows Russian military equipment*”.

Source: Fakty TVN, 18/08/2014

Russia's involvement in Ukraine was also confirmed by Wiadości TVP1. The material “The act of aggression” (Wiadości TVP1, 28/08/2014) presents interviews with Alexander Zakharchenko and one of the recruiters of the volunteer armed forces, who openly admitted that Russian soldiers are fighting with them. At the same time, Zakharchenko stresses that Russian troops are fighting in Ukraine as a part of their vacation, and not because of orders from the Kremlin. However, these explanations seemed unreliable to representatives of Polish authorities and experts, who called it a Russian invasion.

The TVN and TVP broadcast interviews and video confirming Russian presence in Ukraine for over one hour and twenty minutes, which is five percent of the total time dedicated to Ukraine by these media. This topic appeared on a cover only once, in *Rzeczpospolita*. The number of pages describing the issue of Russian military involvement amounted to 20.5 pages, that is three percent of all pages. Therefore, taking into account the amount of information, not the number of produced materials, it can be seen that television devoted more attention to this issue than tabloids and quality newspapers.

Although there are differences in the amount of information published about the conflict between different media, in the case of dominant topics it is possible to see that there are great similarities (see Tab. 3.1). The Polish media presented the conflict with emphasis on similar issues, for example international sanctions. As a result, the coverage by the mainstream media, at least at the level of topic selection, was very similar. Other frequently covered topics – like “consequences

of the conflict for Poland" (12 %) and "Russian military involvement in the conflict" (10 %) – show that also when it comes to the general perspective, the Polish media paid attention to Russia's negative actions, which may be one of the things that confirms the first research hypothesis.

Who made the choices of which topics to cover is very important. Most of the interviewed journalists said that it depended on their own decisions, not the editors or owners. This corresponds to the results of previous research, which showed that Polish journalists feel a high sense of autonomy in their daily work, especially when it comes to choosing which subject to cover (Nygren, 2015: 139). The same study also found that autonomy is a factor independent of the national media system, and more of an integral part of the journalistic profession (Nygren, 2015: 139). That is why the interviewees did not talk about feeling pressure in the case of selecting topics to cover. It was especially so for journalists working in quality newspapers and television programs. Among the reasons for that was that the journalists were on the spot, and the very changeable nature of the conflict. Therefore, the possibility for editors to prepare topics was difficult, which is confirmed by one respondent:

"It was difficult when I was in Donetsk for several days and I could hardly leave, because the pro-Russian side did not give me any accreditation. When for two days I saw how the City Council was burning, and that there were riots, then I had to describe it." [R8]

Being in the conflict area required the TVN journalist to adapt to the rhythm of the dispute and what was happening in front of his eyes. That is why he was in fact deciding the topics that were presented to Polish viewers at 19 o'clock. The same mechanisms were noticeable in the case of public media. The journalist who worked for Polish Television (TVP) also pointed to the course of the conflict as a factor that determines the presented issues more than editors:

"My work is primarily about reporting what is happening. I'm a news journalist and my job is to prepare relatively fast and current relations. In Ukraine, everything that was happening was almost happening in front of me." [R10]

Being able to cover the course of the dispute in a relatively free way may also be the result of the character of television media, which seems to be confirmed by the above statement. Journalists from news stations, who are forced to quickly report information from the front, do not have too much time to prepare materials. Their role, especially in the case of armed conflicts, is documenting rather than creating information. Of course, this situation is mainly applicable to

foreign correspondents close to the action. Journalists who are reporting a dispute from another country may have a slightly different opinion in this respect. A good example is the statement made by a tabloid journalist who claims that teamwork is important in his media organization:

“We work in such a way that we think about a certain category of information and look for it all the time. A lot of ideas were created outside of me, and I was just a worker. It can be said that some of the topics were imposed on me, but I didn’t have to write about something that I disagree with.” [R1]

Teamwork when searching for information that may be interesting to the readers does not seem surprising, since only a few newspapers had their own correspondents in Ukraine. Rewriting, which was also mentioned by the respondent, is almost necessary in this situation. However, relying only on materials created by other media can be problematic. Therefore, taking suggestions from the editor-in-chief or colleagues seems understandable. In addition, the respondent draws attention to the freedom of choice, especially at the ideological level, which is the dimension of internal pluralism (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). In the case of tabloid media, and perhaps even more so in the case of *Fakt*, which has a foreign owner, opinion pluralism and thus ideological plurality seems to be a standard (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2011: 55). Therefore, even if the respondent had to prepare articles for predetermined topics, he still had the freedom to choose if it was something he wanted to do.

Journalists from quality newspapers had a similar situation and also spoke about a general sense of professional autonomy. Both the *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Rzeczpospolita* journalists responded negatively to the question about the influence of the editors, owners or politicians on the selection of topics. One of the respondents even indicated that it is a standard in his media organization:

“I decided what I was describing and who I was talking to. The editorial office consisting of my colleagues sitting on the left and right didn’t interfere in it in any way. This is *Rzeczpospolita* and that’s how it looks.” [R6]

Interestingly, despite the quite clearly defined editorial line, the respondent said that he had full influence on the content of his articles and did not feel any pressure. The teamwork described by the *Fakt* journalist did not take place in this case. This may be due to several reasons. First of all, the respondent mainly write opinion articles or columns, therefore he has the freedom to choose the topic, as well as to give the text a certain tone. Secondly, long work experience, and thus the position in the editorial office can also affect professional autonomy, which

seems important while covering the conflict which is so ambiguous from the Polish point of view.

The journalists' almost total autonomy in selecting topics shows that the editorial line was not an important element in the case of the conflict described. This seems interesting due to the diversity of the analyzed media in this context. Work autonomy is also important for another reason. The choice of subject can influence the audience's perception of the conflict. This is due to the fact that in this way the journalist can draw attention to specific problems that, when published at the right time, can enhance the perspective of the medium or the author (Entman, 1993). One of the respondents points to these factors:

“[...] I started to write about the life of the Crimean Tatars during the annexation processes. The choice of the topic itself was a certain response [to Russia's actions] and showing a bigger drama” [R7]

Drawing attention to the Crimean Tatars in the context of the Ukrainian conflict could be an implicit negative judgement of Russia and pro-Russian actors. Especially when taking into account the displacement of Tatars by the Soviet authorities in the 1940's and problems with their return to the Peninsula (Olszański, 2014). In addition, this minority group was against the inclusion of Crimea to Russia, and their relations with Ukrainian authorities were relatively good. Therefore, describing the Crimea annexation from the point of view of the Crimean Tatars, who were against it, could be a form of journalistic bias. This may indicate a rather pro-Ukrainian than pro-Russian attitude to the situation. On the other hand, it is an extension of the conflict perspective by reference to several actors and sources, which can be considered as acting impartial. This is due to the fact that sketching the context of the conflict and appealing to other actors, usually absent in the media discourse, makes it possible to understand what the dispute is really about.

The choice and frequency of a given topic not only generates social interest, but can also influence the perception of the certain phenomenon. The presented fragments of interviews confirm that it was mostly journalists who decided about topic selection, having almost full autonomy in this matter. However, as previous research shows, journalists often reflect the values and priorities of the media organization they belong to, and editorial policy and similar factors are important for Polish journalists when choosing their workplace (Anikina, 2015: 153). It is possible that the selection of topics, although it is made by the individual journalists, in this way can be influenced by the character of the certain medium. Equally important, if not even more important, is the journalist's nationality,

sense of patriotism and adherence to the national interest (see Sreedharan, 2013; Ravi, 2005). When covering armed conflicts – especially those which affect the journalist's homeland – this may become more important than the interests of the media organization.

3.1.2 Sources

The selection of sources of information as well as the topic selection may influence the tone of the presented information. This is due to the fact that the reference to specific sources or their omission may show the degree of bias of a given medium or a journalist (Lee et al., 2005). This seems particularly important in the case of armed conflicts. Showing both sides, even if we disagree with any of them, is necessary in order to understand the real causes of the dispute (see McGoldrick and Lynch, 2000; Galtung, 2006). The explanation of the extent to which this issue, as well as other ones, could affect the journalistic work and the coverage will be presented in this subsection.

3 518 quotations appeared in the analyzed materials (see Tab. 3.2), which shows that an average of two quotations per material was used. It should be noted that the analysis included only visible sources. The greatest number of quotations were used by *Wiadomości TVP1* (944 quotations), and *Gazeta Wyborcza* (781 quotations). The least references were found in tabloids (431 quotations in total). The differences mainly result from the number of collected research units, and may be caused by the necessity of using quotes from other media or sources, rather than information obtained from individual conversations. Therefore, the most rarely quoted sources included press agencies and social media. The Russian soldiers and citizens were equally rarely referred to, which may be due to the fact that Russia's military involvement in Ukraine was not officially confirmed by the Kremlin for some time (Walker, 2015). That is why access to military sources of information could have been limited. On the other hand, contacts with the army are generally marked by certain restrictions (see Czapnik, 2007; Knightley, 2003), for example due to confidentiality but perhaps also a willingness to control information output. This in turn might explain the relatively low amount of quotations of Ukrainian soldiers (5 %).

Tab. 3.2: *Sources of information (in percent).*

	Fakt	Super Express	Gazeta Wyborcza	Rzeczpospolita	Wiadomości TVP1	Fakty TVN	Total
Press agency	1	1	0	0	2	0	1
Foreign media	7	6	5	8	5	2	5
Journalist in the conflict area	9	12	9	0	5	5	6
Social media	1	3	1	0	2	0	1
Ukrainian politicians	8	9	1	14	12	12	10
Ukrainian military	3	2	6	3	7	5	5
Ukrainian citizens	2	2	2	1	6	4	3
Russian politicians	6	2	12	8	6	10	8
Russian military	1	1	2	0	1	0	1
Russian citizens	1	0	0	1	1	1	1
Separatists	3	3	7	5	5	6	5
Polish politicians	14	16	7	14	11	20	13
Polish military	5	3	0	1	1	2	2
Polish citizens	5	4	1	0	1	2	1
Polish experts	15	8	2	4	2	9	5
Russian experts	2	1	5	2	1	0	2
Ukrainian experts	0	1	4	6	0	0	2
International experts	1	6	7	10	5	1	6
EU-politicians	4	4	9	9	10	8	9
US-politicians	2	2	4	5	5	4	4
NATO	2	1	3	2	3	2	2
Civilians in and from conflict area	3	2	2	0	2	3	2
Other	5	11	11	7	7	4	6
Total	188	243	781	682	944	680	3518

Source: Author

Political actors are the most quoted sources, which could mean that the coverage was strongly elite-oriented, which according to Galtung is one of the common aspects of war journalism (2006). In this way it is possible that less attention is paid to the opinions of the victims of the conflict (see Galtung, 2002; Ottosen, 2009: 93), which indeed could explain the low number of quotations of civilians in and from conflict area (2 %) in comparison with political actors (44 %). These were mainly representatives of Polish authorities, as well as representatives of the parties to the conflict. European Union members were also often referred to. Often quoting politicians may result from the dominant topic of the coverage, which was international political discussion and sanctions. In

addition, especially in the case of quality media, talking to official sources seems to be important, due to the nature of the presented information, and also because of their credibility and knowledge (see Lee and Maslog, 2005; Paletz and Entman, 1981) which is confirmed by one respondent's statement:

"First of all, if I am describing this conflict from the Polish perspective, then these [sources] are from having contacts with the politicians themselves. These are interviews, and also conversations that take place on all occasions. For example, with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and people around him. With the Minister of Defense, and President." [R4]

Covering the conflict from a particular perspective may affect the selection of sources (Riegert, 1998), which was mentioned by the respondent. That is why in the case of Polish media the dominant sources of information were national politicians (13 %). Following this lead, one should consider the extent to which more frequent references to Ukrainian sources (20 % in total) than Russian (12 % in total) or pro-Russian (5 %) could reflect the general perspective of the conflict. That is to say, it could have been connected to a mutual dislike between the media and the pro-Russian side, or perhaps it was difficult in general to contact them. To find out what could have been the cause, the journalists were asked about the extent to which their Polish origin influenced their contacts with the sides of the conflict. The *Rzeczpospolita* journalist said that during his phone conversations with separatists, he felt a real dislike, because of his origin:

"They cursed at me at first. I have repeatedly experienced these types of things in the East for various reasons. There are very different resentments in relation to Poland. And it is very possible that my patience would end at some point." [R6]

At the same time, the respondent points out that despite some reluctance, he tried to approach his work in a neutral way. Although he disagreed with separatists, and even thought their words were nonsense, he decided to present their point of view:

"I have nothing to regret when it comes to giving the floor to the opposite side. I even have a grudge against myself that I muddled the minds of my readers with what they [Separatists] were talking about." [R6]

The desire to present the opinion of both sides was also one of the reasons why the TVP journalist went to the Crimea during its annexation and later to Donbass, despite "Western media" not being welcome there. She said that Russian propaganda was the reason for this situation:

"They were fantastic for Russian journalists, and very negative for Polish and Western ones (...) They were very negative for the media, but you had to be hard and say: We

came here, because we want to know what is your position, and why you want to be a part of Russia. This made things easier.” [R9]

Although interstate relations or history could have influenced the contact between the media and parties to the conflict the journalists tried to present the event in a rather neutral way, which was confirmed by the respondents.

Another issue that limited access to sources is the fact that mainly *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Wiadomości TVP1* and *Fakty TVN* had their correspondents in Ukraine during the research period. Others were mostly describing the conflict from Warsaw. Therefore, it was necessary for them to rely on their own contacts and internet sources. Consequently, the possibility of talking to civilians or soldiers could have been limited. That is why some of the media had to rely on freelancers or other media's reporting, which was especially common for tabloids:

“We used the correspondence of other Poles. TVN always had their correspondents so we also used what they gave.” [R1]

The use of information from other media was common in the case of those media organizations that did not have their own journalists in Ukraine. In order to preserve the plurality of information, it was necessary to refer to other sources, including foreign ones. Using information from foreign media (5 %) could be one of the forms of solving the problem, and journalists often did it:

“I worked with original, not translated sources. These were Ukrainian, Russian, English, mainly American sources. Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, the Guardian. Generally a wide spectrum.” [R3]

Looking at and taking information from foreign media also seemed important in the case of a desire to hear the rhetoric of the parties to the conflict. Especially when it was difficult for a direct contact:

“For some time I was an urgent listener and viewer of Russia Today, which might not have been too glorious, but it was a tool used to learn the argumentation and thinking of the other side.” [R4]

The use of Ukrainian or Russian sources of information, especially media, seemed necessary to check to what extent national media influenced public opinion on the conflict and the “enemy”. However, relying on these types of information could also be threat to journalists. The very nature of the covered phenomenon meant that filtering information, especially if it came from the parties to the conflict, was more crucial than in the case of other events. Disinformation was an element of warfare (see Pacek, 2018; Baluk and Doroszko, 2017). Therefore, a lot of fake news appeared in the media and other information channels.

The content analysis allowed for examining the degree of source criticism found in the materials (see Tab. 3.3). Additionally, it was checked which side of the conflict was accused of disinformation and fake news, both by the journalists and their sources (see Tab. 3.4). In this way it was possible to check whether the journalists judged the parties to the conflict similarly, or if one side was seen as more dishonest. In the case of conflict reporting and war journalism in general, it is quite common to “expose ‘their’ untruths” (Galtung, 2006), which usually benefits the perceived victim rather than the aggressor (see Ottosen, 2005; McLaughlin, 2002). This seems to confirm the results of the content analysis and interviews with journalists.

Explicit criticism of sources appeared in 104 of the materials, and 56 times in total in television news. Most of the criticism concerned false information. Forty three percent of all criticism toward sources referred to this issue. Materials made by Wiadomości TVP1 and *Gazeta Wyborcza* provide good examples. The material “Polish mercenaries” (09/06/2014) made by TVP presents separatists accusing Polish and Czech military companies for involvement in the conflict and supporting the Ukrainian side. These claims were negated both by experts and government representatives, and considered as Russian propaganda. Another example was related to the massacre in Donetsk, where civilians were killed while waiting for the trolleybus (Wiadomości TVP1, “Ukraine”, 22/01/2015). Kiev authorities held pro-Russian separatists responsible for the attack, while the Kremlin spoke about a Ukrainian crime against humanity. The civilians’ statements, including the families of the victims, that the attack was initiated by separatists were also presented. Accusations against the Kremlin and the pro-Russian separatists, as well as criticism of their statements, were also made after the MH17 catastrophe. Materials on this topic appeared in *Gazeta Wyborcza* in the articles “Who shot down the passenger plane?” (18/07/2014) or “Moscow blames Ukraine” (19/07/2014). These materials contained criticism expressed by both the sources themselves, for example Ukrainian authorities, as well as the journalist. Radziwinowicz, who was at that time correspondent for *Gazeta Wyborcza* in Moscow, wrote that the Kremlin began a propaganda campaign against Ukrainians just after the shooting down of MH17 (“Moscow blames Ukraine”, 19/07/2014). It was made to transfer the responsibility for the catastrophe to the Ukrainians. The journalist refers to reports by Russia Today and to the Russian politician Mironow, who say that it is Europe and the USA who want to blame Russia for the catastrophe, and make false accusations.

Tab. 3.3: *Kind of criticism expressed toward sources (in percent).*

	<i>Fakt</i>	<i>Super Express</i>	<i>Gazeta Wyborcza</i>	<i>Rzeczpospolita</i>	Wiadomości TVP1	Fakty TVN	Total
Partiality	0	75	22	33	13	33	21
Not complete picture	0	0	6	45	12	33	16
False facts	6	0	67	22	75	25	43
Other	94	25	5	0	0	9	20
N =	17	4	18	9	32	24	104

Source: Author

The criticism towards Russian authorities and the separatists for transmitting false information showed that these entities were considered to provide most of the disinformation being spread (see Tab. 3.4). Both the analyzed materials and the respondents' statements confirmed that it was the Russian media and politicians, who manipulated information to the greatest extent. Only in one percent of the materials in total was the Ukrainian side accused of the same thing, and only in Wiadomości TVP1 and Fakty TVN, but these accusations mainly came from quotes. In this regard, it seems that Galtung's (2006) theory that the media focus mostly on the lies of one side, was confirmed. It is also a form of confirmation of the first research hypothesis, because it shows that the Polish media did not recognize the Russian side as a reliable source of information. This was also confirmed by the low number of quotations of Russian actors, which might consequently influence the perspective of the coverage.

Tab. 3.4: *Side accused of disinformation and fake news (in percent).*

	<i>Fakt</i>	<i>Super Express</i>	<i>Gazeta Wyborcza</i>	<i>Rzeczpospolita</i>	Wiadomości TVP1	Fakty TVN	Total
Russia (politicians + media)	65	85	71	96	59	71	73
Russian rebels	35	15	29	4	38	26	26
Ukraine (military)	0	0	0	0	3	3	1
N=	23	20	38	26	33	35	176

Source: Author

One of the issues for which the Kremlin was criticized the most was the denial of the presence of Russian troops in Ukraine – despite the later confirmation by Putin that Russian soldiers were in Crimea before and after referendum. This behavior by the Russian authorities, spreading this type of information in the public space, is unacceptable for the *Gazeta Wyborcza* journalist:

“Putin, who said that there are no soldiers on Crimea, and then admits that, of course, our brave soldiers liberated the Crimea, this is a first degree falsification. And that’s not some random guy saying that, but the President of the state. Interestingly, he doesn’t hide it. If we look at it from this point of view, then this is a waterfall, this is Niagara of lies.” [R4]

The Russian authorities being perceived as presenting false information could have made both Western media and the international community not willing to accept messages from them (see Boyd-Barrett, 2017; Pasitselska, 2017). It was equally problematic to accept the opinions of pro-Russian separatists, because they undertook almost identical activities in this matter as the Kremlin. The *Rzeczpospolita* journalist even claimed that the separatists acted similar to communists from the time of the Polish People’s Republic, who used lies to manipulate the public:

“When I talked to them, it took me back to my youth and it was like talking with PZPR’s agitators. It’s a qualitative leap. It’s not quantitative, that someone is lying less or more. This is a qualitative leap. For them there is no sense of truth or lies. There is revolutionary truth and everything is subordinated to it.” [R6]

Furthermore, Russian media, especially TV stations, very often duplicated the Kremlin’s messages, while also creating their own, which served to strengthen the authorities’ rhetoric. In addition, the Ukrainian perspective was often lacking, which made it difficult for the recipients to create their own opinion about the dispute. One of the journalists who were in Ukraine during the research period mentions that he had the opportunity to observe how the Russian media worked on the spot:

“From my point of view, it had nothing to do with journalism. For me it is a complete denial of journalism.” [R5]

The respondent explains that the Russian media were not interested in presenting reliable information, neither the context of the conflict or the opinion of the other side. This was difficult to understand and accept for Western countries and media. However, as the TVP journalist explains, this is the result of differences at the level of professed values, and thus accepted standards:

“We don’t understand one thing. We are still governing by our democratic rights. We present information in such a way that we present at least two sources, two sides of the conflict, because it’s more honest. And they don’t care.” [R9]

Presenting only one side of the conflict, or even downright false information, was an important element of the war. That is why, apart from the armed conflict,

there was also an informational conflict in Ukraine – making it a so-called hybrid war – which one respondent points out:

“These are classic hybrid activities – not only kinetics, but also soft activities in the media, on the internet – which the war in Ukraine showed in an outstanding way.” [R11]

Hybrid war includes disinformation and propaganda as one of its dimensions (see Nemeth, 2002; Pacek, 2018), and as confirmed by the respondent [R11], this strongly influenced the media's work. However, running the war in this way was not only the result of Russia's actions. The analysis of the research materials (see Tab. 3.4) and interviews with journalists showed that the Ukrainian side also used information tools at that time:

“There is a lot of such disinformation, both on the Ukrainian and Russian side, because propaganda is a tool used during the conflict.” [R10]

The opinion of the Wiadomości TVP1 journalist seems to be confirmed by another respondent. He adds that the work of the media in such conditions can be as difficult as working near the battlefield, because of the necessity to separate truth from propaganda:

“All parties to the conflict work in this way. You must understand that it's necessary to be able to verify information, and this is often difficult. Sometimes impossible.” [R11]

The difficulty or complete inability to verify some sources could lead to them being underrepresented (see Tab. 3.2). On the other hand, the disinformation tools used, especially by the Russian side and separatists, made Polish and Western politicians and media, treat their messages as unreliable information. The problem was also the low number of Polish correspondents in Ukraine, as well as complicated inter-state and intercultural relations between Poland, Ukraine and Russia, which, according to the respondents, was also a difficulty in the access to sources. That is why Polish politicians were the most often quoted sources. However, the Ukrainian sources were also often quoted, which had the effect that this side of the conflict, and the Ukrainian perspective, might have been dominant in the Polish coverage.

3.2 Definition of the conflict

The events in Ukraine, which coverage by the Polish media is the subject of my study, can be defined in various ways. Considering the definitions used in international relations studies, it is difficult to say whether this is an armed conflict or a war. And if it is the latter, it raises the question of whether it is a civil war or rather a war between states. Another frequently used term is hybrid war which combines armed struggle, both between state and non-state actors, with elements of economic and informational warfare (see Pawlak, 2015; Hajduk and

Stępniewski, 2015: 136). It seems interesting to study how the media defined the events in Eastern Europe and their causes, because there is a difference of opinion on this matters. This is important, because media discourse can shape social discourse, especially in the context of the conflict causality, the applied nomenclature, and thus its general perception.

3.2.1 Nature of the conflict

One of the issues featured in the content analysis was the causes of the conflict. Seventy eight percent of the gathered material contained information about it (see Tab. 3.5). Among the six key reasons for the conflict in Ukraine, most were related to Russia's rather than Ukraine's actions. Russian support for separatists was mentioned 53 percent of the time as the cause. Thirty four percent of the time, it was presented as a Russian invasion. Therefore it can be seen that the media recognized the Russians and separatists as guilty of starting the conflict. This might have something to do with the dispositional enemy image of Russia, where the Polish media seem to have expected from the start that Russia would be the aggressor (see Ottosen, 1995). The historically hostile Polish-Russian relations could have played an important role in this respect.

Tab. 3.5: *The causes of the conflict (in percent).*

	<i>Fakt</i>	<i>Super Express</i>	<i>Gazeta Wyborcza</i>	<i>Rzeczpospolita</i>	<i>Wiadomości TVP1</i>	<i>Fakty TVN</i>	Total
Ukrainian nationalism suppressing Russians in Ukraine	4	1	1	0	0	0	1
Western interference in Ukraine	8	2	2	0	0	3	4
As a result of divided country	11	2	5	1	9	3	5
Russian support for separatists	33	55	54	48	67	64	53
Russian invasion	38	39	36	49	24	29	34
Other	6	1	2	2	0	1	3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N=	156	187	349	210	274	173	1349

Source: Author

It is possible to notice some differences between television and newspapers in how they presented the causes of the conflict. The view of both Wiadomości TVP1 and Fakty TVN, was that Russian support for the separatists had the greatest impact on the outbreak of military combat (over 60 % of their broadcasted segments in total). Military assistance was the most common form of that support. In one of TVP's segments, "Fights in Ukraine," the Ukrainian authorities accused Russia of arming separatists in Donetsk and Lugansk, who attacked civilians and fired on a bus (Wiadomości TVP1, 14/01/2015). Accusations of providing arms to separatists are also made in the material "Ukrainian offensive" (Wiadomości TVP1, 18/01/2015). In the news segment, devoted to the fight for the Donetsk airport, it was said that the separatists used Russian weapons against the Ukrainian army, and in effect Russia supported one side of the war. The Russian support for the rebels was also discussed in the context of the annexation of Crimea, which might be considered as the beginning of the conflict. For example, in Fakty TVN some materials discussed Russian soldiers disarming Ukrainian troops stationed in Crimea (16/03/2014) and Putin's request to the Duma to accept the inclusion of the Peninsula to the Russian Federation (19/03/2014).

Rzeczpospolita had a somewhat different perspective. The quality newspaper recognized that it was a Russian invasion that inflamed the situation in Eastern Ukraine (49 %). It was quite eloquently expressed on one of the August covers of the daily (see Picture 3.6), which seems to be a good example of illustrating the dispositional enemy image of Russia with pictures (Ottosen, 1995). On its first page, *Rzeczpospolita* published an article called "Russia attacks Ukraine" (29/08/2014) about a joint attack of separatists and Russian troops on the port in Nowoazowsk. The author of the material refers to President Poroshenko, who said that the Russian invasion may lead to the separation of Ukraine from the Azov Sea. At the same time, the US ambassador for the OSCE is quoted as saying that Russia's actions are a threat to Ukrainian independence. Despite the rather negative tone of the text, the reader's attention is likely caught by the attached graphic by Krauze. The graphic shows a huge bear in a military cap with a red star, lying with his back to the ground. It can be assumed that this bear is meant to symbolize Russia. There are also smaller, almost crushed, figures escaping from under his body, which may refer to Ukrainian society or army. It seems that the size of the bear and figures were used to compare the Russian and Ukrainian forces, and to highlight the fact that Russia is an active aggressor in the conflict. However, the caption of the graphic seems to be the most interesting. It says: "It's not an invasion, I just want to stretch my bones!" This sentence might be a sarcastic response to the Kremlin's statements that Russia is not a party to the conflict. However, the information presented in the article is a kind of contradiction, because although Russia officially did not participate in the war, it still supported the separatists, who are important actors in the dispute.



Picture 3.6: “Russia attacks Ukraine”.

Source: *Rzeczpospolita*, 29/08/2014

Russia's support for separatists was also often highlighted in the case of how the conflict was described (see Tab. 3.6). The content analysis shows that most often, the events in Ukraine were defined as a conflict between the state and non-state actors supported by another state. Slightly less often – with a difference of only two percentage points – the conflict was called a dispute between two states, Russia and Ukraine. Despite the fact that Russian support for separatists, and not Russian invasion, was the most often mentioned description of the conflict, Russia's involvement was so significant that the conflict could have been regarded as a dispute between states.

Covering the conflict in Ukraine as an inter-state dispute was most often done by journalists from quality newspapers. This type of rhetoric was especially noticeable in *Rzeczpospolita*. This is not surprising, especially since the daily considered Russian invasion as the main cause of the dispute. A good example is the article “Putin liked war” (*Rzeczpospolita*, 08/04/2014). Already in the first sentence information was presented about Russian aggression in Ukraine, which was apparent in Crimea, and which constituted a serious violation of international law. Therefore, it is a confirmation that the dispute is going on at the inter-state level. At the same time, the article contains references to events in modern history, especially the

conflicts in Chechnya and Georgia, where Russia's involvement was also obvious. The author also critically refers to the actions of the West, claiming that the lack of decisive action meant that the EU and NATO demonstrated their weakness towards the Kremlin, which is a party to the dispute and in fact the aggressor. Importantly, the very titles of some of the articles from *Rzeczpospolita* suggest that the role of Russia is critical in this dispute. Examples include: "Russians are waiting at the border" (*Rzeczpospolita*, 18–19/06/2014), "Russia is breaking into Ukraine: a new front in the south" (*Rzeczpospolita*, 26/08/2014), and "Russians again in Ukraine" (*Rzeczpospolita*, 05/11/2014). The apparent armed presence of the Russian Federation in Ukraine may therefore be taken as a confirmation that they took an active part in the dispute, and are not just passively supporting the separatists' cause.

Tab. 3.6: *Definition of the conflict (in percent).*

	<i>Fakt</i>	<i>Super Express</i>	<i>Gazeta Wyborcza</i>	<i>Rzeczpospolita</i>	Wiadomości TVP1	Fakty TVN	Total
Between states	27	42	41	72	39	24	44
Between the state and non-state actors within the state	2	1	2	3	7	3	3
Between the state and non-state actors supported by another state	59	49	54	20	52	55	46
As a civil war	0	0	2	1	0	0	1
Between the East and West	4	4	1	1	0	2	2
Other	8	4	0	3	2	16	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N=	170	206	438	385	294	233	1726

Source: Author

The most commonly used description of the event was that it was a conflict between Ukraine and the separatists supported by Russia. The most materials with this angle appeared in *Fakty TVN*, *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Fakt*. Similarly to the causes of the conflict, the description of the conflict was usually related to military and political support given to the rebels by Russia. In addition, the importance of Russia in the dispute was also expressed through materials dedicated to

peace negotiations. An interesting example is the material that appeared in Fakty TVN (03/09/2014). It said that despite starting a dialogue at the state level, Russia claims that the events in Ukraine constitute a civil war. Therefore, the peace talks which Russia was invited to should take place between Ukraine and the separatists, without the Kremlin. The material also includes Barack Obama's statements who, during his visit to Estonia, said that Russia's goal is to destabilize the situation in Ukraine in the long term. The then US president also said that although the conflict is physically led by separatists, they are encouraged and supported financially and militarily by Russia. Defining the conflict as a dispute between a state and non-state actors supported by another state was also visible in the newspaper coverage. In the article "Who disassembles Ukraine" (02/05/2014) the *Gazeta Wyborcza* journalist tries to answer the question – who is in fact to blame for the crisis in Eastern Europe? The author claims that the situation in Donetsk is very similar to what happened in Transnistria, especially since this dispute too concerned the Russian-speaking population, and the involvement of Russia was also significant. The same situation was, in his opinion, taking place in Ukraine. The journalist claims that the Kremlin has been destabilizing Ukraine since the 1990's, and supporting separatists is just a part of this plan. The article is an interesting example of how journalists describe the conflict in Ukraine. Although it is indicated that the dispute is taking place between Ukraine and the rebels, the use of historical references to the situation in Transnistria may strengthen the feeling that Russia's presence there is not accidental. This is due to the fact that the historical contexts have a specific meaning and give the recipient a clear way to interpret the content (Gurevitch et al., 1995), in this case in a strongly anti-Russian way. The difference in what terms the media used to describe the conflict is relatively little, since journalists seem to take it for granted that Russia is the aggressor.

The differences in how the causes of the conflict were described, and the different terminology used by the media, may have resulted from problems of determining what was actually happening in Ukraine. During the interviews, some journalists were asked how they would describe the fighting in Ukraine and the reasons of their occurrence. Some of the answers show that respondents could have had problems with clearly defining the dispute due to its complexity. This issue was noted by the *Gazeta Wyborcza* journalist:

"More and more often we have to deal with situations in which it's increasingly difficult to determine what a war is in the classic sense of the word and what it's not. It is such a problem for us that this is partly a war between two countries, but also an internal war." [R4]

Despite having experience in covering armed conflicts, the quoted journalist points out that the conflict in Ukraine differed from the other wars he has

reported on. Therefore, clearly identifying who the actual parties to the dispute are, and why it started, could have been problematic. This opinion seems to be confirmed by another respondent:

"I think that with this conflict, it is like with the name of this war, which is also a hybrid in some sense. On the one hand, we can see Russian aggression against Ukraine from the beginning, because weapons were delivered. On the other hand, there are also locals who are involved in this conflict. It is very complicated." [R5]

The hybrid character of the dispute was certainly an element that could hinder the work of journalists, both due to the involvement of certain actors and also because of the disinformation. However, despite the complexity of the events, the quoted respondents confirmed that Russia's role in the conflict was significant, although it was shown in various ways. A similar trend was observed in the case of the content analysis. Considering how the causes of the conflict were defined, it can be noticed that especially for *Rzeczpospolita* the situation in Ukraine was the result of Russia's aggression. The quality newspaper quite clearly expressed this issue, while writing about Russia's violation of international law and similar activities in the past. Although the other analyzed media more often than *Rzeczpospolita* blamed the pro-Russian separatists for the conflict, a strong criticism of Russia in general was also visible in their content. It is worth noting that only a few materials blamed Ukraine for the war. Such articles appeared in the press, in tabloids and in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, but they were rather the results of used quotations than the opinions of journalists or media in general.

3.2.2 Terminology used to describe the conflict

An important element of the conducted research was also to check what words were used to describe the events in Ukraine as well as the actors participating in them. On this basis, it was possible to see what kinds of meanings were given to these issues by the media, especially in the context of their later perception by the audience (see Nygren et al., 2016: 7; Winston et al., 2010: 97). It seems that the phrases used, together with the description of the causes of the conflict and its definition, may reinforce support for one perspective – pro-Russian or pro-Ukrainian. In that way it is possible for the media to put the main responsibility for the conflict on one of the two parties and at the same time create a dichotomy between "victim" and "enemy" (Carpentier, 2005). That can lead to the "enemy" party being demonized, which has been seen in how the media defined the causes of the conflict and its character.

Among the list of alternatives, the events in Ukraine were most often referred to as a "war" (see Tab. 3.7). It seems that this type of expression could be associated with the presence of a state actor in the dispute and it being aggressive, as

well as with intense military operations. Secondly, the word “war” is definitely more emotionally charged than “conflict”. Therefore, the use of such terms by the media could emphasize the information, and thus increase the interest of recipients. Furthermore, by using the word “war”, which has strongly negative connotations for most people (Cox, 2016), some of the media outlets may have wanted to give Russia’s actions in Ukraine a negative tone. Examples include articles from *Rzeczpospolita*, such as “Putin threatens war” (03/03/2014), and *Fakt* – “The world is facing war and the West is silent” (03/03/2014). Looking at the frequency of the term in the materials, it can be seen that it was most often used by television and tabloids (see Tab. 3.7). In the case of quality newspapers, especially *Rzeczpospolita*, the term “conflict” was used, which has a more broad meaning and may refer to both military actions and economic and political disputes (see Tab. 3.7). This seems to be understandable considering the most frequently described issues by the daily, which were international political discussion and sanctions. “Russian invasion” was the third most frequently used term about the events in Ukraine. This concept was mainly used by journalists from *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Rzeczpospolita* in the case of opinion articles. Interestingly, most articles on this subject were published in March and April 2014, which may be related to the annexation of Crimea and the presence of so-called “little green men” on the peninsula. Therefore, it shows that the phrases used – “war” as well as “Russian invasion” – are directly connected to the negative actions of Russia.

Tab. 3.7: *Terms used to describe the events in Ukraine (in percent).*

	<i>Fakt</i>	<i>Super Express</i>	<i>Gazeta Wyborcza</i>	<i>Rzeczpospolita</i>	Wiadomości TVP1	Fakty TVN	Total
War	49	46	40	35	60	53	46
Conflict	16	29	31	43	23	32	31
Situation	2	9	4	1	2	0	3
Civil war	0	1	2	1	2	0	1
Russian invasion	4	10	14	15	2	5	9
Crisis	12	1	4	3	4	7	5
Uprising rebellion	5	3	2	0	0	0	1
Intervention	12	0	0	0	0	0	1
ATO	0	1	3	2	7	3	3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N=	122	200	391	355	292	206	1566

The terms used for the parties to the conflict have also been analyzed. The rebels were usually referred to as “separatists”, “Russians” or “pro-Russian” actors (see Tab. 3.8). The differences may result both from the description of the conflict (see Tab. 3.5) and its causes (see Tab. 3.6), as well as from the twofold nature of the dispute – that it is a war between states or between a state and non-state actors supported by another state. This complexity could cause difficulties in defining the involved parties, especially since some of the terms already contain very strong connotations, and linguistic frames can also be used as a way to demonize the enemy (Ottosen, 1995). It is worth noting that the quality media, both the press and television, most often used the terms “separatists” in relation to the rebels, because it corresponds to how Ukraine is being divided. It is a less negative term than “bandit” or “terrorist,” which in fact also appeared on the list. Therefore, the use of the terms “pro-Russian” or “separatists” seems to be less judgmental for the media to use, especially for television and quality dailies, and thus a more secure choice of wording. Tabloids most often went for the term “Russians”, thus indicating the involvement of Russia in Ukraine. A good example is the article “That’s how Putin lies” from *Fakt* about the occupation of Crimea, where the journalist wrote that “Russian soldiers based in the Crimea are those self-defense units wearing uniforms bought in the shop just around the corner” (06/03/14). The article sarcastically paraphrases Putin’s words, who stated that the soldiers in Crimea were not from the Russian army, and that similar uniforms could be bought in almost every military shop (Shevchenko, 2014). The use of the word “Russians” by tabloids may be associated with the most often mentioned cause of the dispute – a “Russian invasion”. Moreover, it might be a way of presenting Russia’s actions as illegal and aggressive (Boyd-Barrett, 2017). *Fakt* and *Super Express* made more references to the Russian army than to the separatists (see Tab. 3.8), which can mean that these media through language demonized Russia’s actions in the strongest way. Interestingly, the results of the project “Ukraine 2014 – media war and the war in media” (see Nygren and Hök, 2016; Nygren et al., 2016) showed that the Ukrainian media very rarely used phrases that referred directly to Russia. It can therefore be said that the language used by the Polish media was more characterized by a demonization of Russia than the Ukrainian media – despite Ukraine being a side of the conflict and victim of Russia’s aggression. I realize that this is not a perfect comparison since the project covered a much shorter research period as well as a smaller number of analyzed media. However, it is still interesting because it shows that Poland’s aversion toward Russia – for example due to historical reasons – might have been stronger than the animosity felt by Ukraine.

Among the words least used were such terms as “terrorists” and “criminals/ bandits”. The interviewed journalists were asked if the use of those names in relation to the parties to the conflict is appropriate. Most of the respondents considered this unacceptable, especially because of the words’ emotional character. They accepted them to appear in opinion articles. However, one of the respondents said that such nomenclature can be appropriate, because of the methods used by the parties to the conflict:

“If someone uses terrorist methods, then you can use such wording. That is, what happened in Crimea can be described as a terrorist act. It was not an open war. It is not an ordinary crime. It’s terrorism.” [R2]

The *Gazeta Wyborcza* journalist disagrees. He believes that the same effect – that is, condemnation of what has happened in the eyes of the recipients – can be achieved by accurately reporting what is happening:

“From my point of view, it seems that the description of a given event can defend itself. Then the reader can call it what he wants. Certain things, even if I don’t use the term [terrorist/bandits], still looks bad.” [R5]

It is important to clarify that in most cases these words were used in quotes. The journalists also agree that when words like “terrorist/bandit” are used in the context of referring to someone’s statement, it is necessary to accurately reproduce it. Then the reader can understand the perspectives of both parties better. This opinion is confirmed by one of the quality newspaper journalists:

“If there is a quote from the Prime Minister, a high military Ukrainian, and he says “Donetsk bandits,” from my point of view as a journalist, what should I write to the Polish reader? Should I write that the general said “Donetsk separatists”? No, because he did not say that. They are using some words to create a certain atmosphere around the conflict. And if we translate such statements, I think we should translate them literally.” [R6]

The *Rzeczpospolita* journalist’s explanation seems reasonable. Referring to direct statements made by the parties to the conflict lets the recipient see the conflict as it really is. Therefore, the responsibility for using a particular word and its tone lies more on these actors, not on the journalists. On the other hand, when journalists use such statements they may show support for one of the sides of the dispute in a fairly clear way, which is well illustrated by the opinion of the respondent:

“I think that the language battles will last very long, and often the way the words rebel, terrorist and insurgent are used, also determines the attitude to the Ukrainian conflict, which is not always unambiguous.” [R4]

Although most of the analyzed media called rebels in the conflict area “separatists,” putting it in a certain context can produce the same negative connotation as “terrorists” or “bandits” would. That is why it seems important to pay attention to the tone given to particular actors and the general perspective of the coverage, which will be presented in the last subsection.

Tab. 3.8: *Terms used to describe the rebels (in percent).*

	<i>Fakt</i>	<i>Super Express</i>	<i>Gazeta Wyborcza</i>	<i>Rzeczpospolita</i>	Wiadomości TVP1	Fakty TVN	Total
Terrorists	4	8	3	4	7	3	5
Pro-Russian	11	12	13	20	13	17	14
Rebels	3	2	5	4	5	5	3
Soldiers	4	0	6	9	10	1	6
Separatists	29	30	38	42	65	60	44
Militants	0	0	1	2	0	1	1
Criminal/ bandits	1	1	1	0	0	2	1
Russians	48	47	33	19	0	11	26
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N=	114	181	341	201	218	139	1194

Source: Author

The used terminology was also examined in the case of the Ukrainian side of the conflict (see Tab. 3.9). The Ukrainian army, just like the rebels, was most often defined by neutral expressions. In this case, it was with the word “soldiers”. Interestingly, all of the six Polish media used this phrase most often. Therefore, no significant discrepancies between the media were noticed, like in the case of describing the rebels. The dominance of military-oriented (“soldiers”, “artillery”) rather than ideology-oriented (“fascists”) terms shows that in the case of the Ukrainian side the media paid more attention to their military actions. Of course, words that had a more judgmental character were also used. For example, the Ukrainians were called “defenders”, which indicates that they are the victim in the dispute, and therefore their actions are justified responses to aggression, mainly from Russia (see Tab. 3.8). This term was often used by the Wiadomości TVP1, the *Super Express* and the *Gazeta Wyborcza* journalists. The latter wrote about Ukrainian “defenders” in the context of the annexation of Crimea in the article “Ukraine will not give up” (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, 17/03/2014). The tabloids used a similar tone with a slightly more blunt language, which is expressed in the

text “Only strength can stop the aggressor” (*Fakt*, 27/03/2014). Defending itself against Russia was not the only activity of the Ukrainian army described by the media. Journalists also mentioned their fights with the separatists. Wiadomości TVP1 broadcasted material about it. The segment titled “Ukrainian offensive” (Wiadomości TVP1, 18/01/2015) discussed the expulsion of separatists from the Donesk airport. Importantly, both in the case of the words “soldiers” and “defenders”, references were made to military operations, with the most frequently used description of the events in Ukraine, for example “war”. This can be evidence of a strong military angle in the materials.

Negative terms were also used in the case of the Ukrainian army. The soldiers were called “fascists”, but this term was used in a quote and was not necessarily representative of the journalist’s opinion. It is worth noting that these expressions constituted only two percent of all words used to describe the Ukrainians (see Tab. 3.9). However, the total amount of times that this word was used is definitely lower than in the case of the terms “terrorist” and “bandit”, referring to the rebels. Therefore, it can be assumed that how the Ukrainian side was defined in the research materials was more positive than in the case of the rebels.

Tab. 3.9: *Terms used to describe the Ukrainian army (in percent).*

	<i>Fakt</i>	<i>Super Express</i>	<i>Gazeta Wyborcza</i>	<i>Rzeczpospolita</i>	Wiadomości TVP1	Fakty TVN	Total
Soldiers	87	62	73	89	56	90	73
Volunteers	0	0	1	0	2	0	1
Heroes	0	4	0	0	0	0	1
Defenders	0	30	20	7	36	2	20
Fascists	6	0	4	2	1	1	2
Security forces	2	1	2	0	0	0	1
Right sector	0	1	0	2	1	2	1
Artillery	5	2	0	0	3	5	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N=	53	91	182	116	185	100	727

Source: Author

The way the conflict and its causes were defined, as well as the terminology used in relation to the parties to the dispute, shows that such elements could have an impact on the coverage’s perspective, which seems to be the confirmation of the first research hypothesis. This is due to the fact that the used terms

can indicate to the recipient how something should be interpreted – as positive or negative. Therefore, the contexts in which specific terms and definitions were used by the media are very important. This was especially apparent on the *Rzeczpospolita* cover where the drawing of a giant white bear symbolized the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Also the historical references used by the journalists, such as the comparison of the conflict in Ukraine to the situation in Transnistria in the *Gazeta Wyborcza* article (“Who disassembles Ukraine” 2014, 02/05/2014), puts a certain perspective on the event and the participating actors. It seems that these factors could have influenced a more pro-Ukrainian than pro-Russian perception of the conflict by the audience, and in result be an example of the media demonizing Russia.

3.3 The perspective of the dispute

The conflict in Ukraine generated a lot of interest from the Polish media, which can be seen by the number of analyzed materials devoted to this issue (see Tab. 3.1). The reason for this might be the geographic proximity of Ukraine, but also Poland's relations with the parties to the dispute. It seems that these factors, which are highly context-oriented, could affect what perspective dominated in the media coverage. Some respondents admitted that they faced difficulties, for example in the access to sources of information, because of their nationality. At the same time, the journalists' national or civilizational affiliation could also have created a general aversion to one of the parties to the conflict – especially when a similar situation like in Ukraine has already occurred in the past with the involvement of this actor. That is why it seems important to check to what extent the Polish journalists have been partial while covering the conflict, and to what extent they acted through the prism of their emotions. According to Russ-Mohl, social and national affiliation plays an important role in the covering of armed conflicts (2013) – in fact, this affiliation can have an even stronger effect on the journalist than the organization he belongs to. This is also confirmed by Wolsfeld (2004). It is also important that these journalists are working for the mainstream media, which, as shown by reports from the Institute of Media Monitoring (2014 and 2015), have a significant impact on the agenda of other media in the country. Therefore, it is possible that other media outlets not only quoted the analyzed media, but also repeated their narrative about the conflict. That is why it is important to pay attention to whether the examined media, while covering the conflict, speak with one voice or not. On this basis, it will be possible to determine if the Polish media was more pro-Ukrainian or pro-Russian.

3.3.1 Dominant and secondary actors

One of the elements that illustrate the dominant coverage perspective is the attitude towards the actors presented in the materials. Two types of actors were taken into account: the dominant actor (see Tab. 3.10) and the secondary actor (see Tab. 3.11). In this way it was possible to observe whether the same negative or positive attitude applied to all actors from the same national group, and if one person personified the whole society or the perceived enemy. Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein have been mentioned as examples of people that were presented as personifications of evil by both the media and the political sphere, although they did not necessarily personify a whole society (Epkins, 2016). It is interesting to see if something similar was done in the coverage of the Ukrainian conflict.

The distinctions between the dominant actor and the secondary actor were made mainly on the basis of the space they and their actions were given. The presence in the lead and in photos was also taken into account (Nygren and Hök, 2016: 272). The list of actors in the code book contains 13 alternatives, which included political actors, armed forces and civilians. Actors who did not fit into any of the specific groups were placed in the “other” category. These were, for example, citizens of other countries who were not representatives of international organizations or political authorities. In the *Super Express* article entitled “Lithuania is preparing for war” information was presented about bringing back military conscription in Lithuania and military exercises for civilians, which was related to Russian aggression in Ukraine (21–22/03/2015). Therefore the Lithuanian army and the Lithuanian civilians were categorized as the “other” actor, even though Lithuania is a member of NATO. However, their actions had an internal character, which is why it was decided that these Lithuanian actors should be included in the “other” category. The same was done in the case of the victims of the MH17 plane crash and their families, but only if they were not Polish, Russian, or Ukrainian citizens. Categories have been created for citizens of these countries. Importantly, the distinction between official actors and civilians will make it possible to check how the media categorize these entities – if the journalists covered them in the same way or not. It is also interesting to see if the media made a distinction between the politicians and the army, and the people. It is worth noting that the coverage of each actor was coded on a scale – positive, neutral and negative. Attention was paid to the tone of the whole material, but especially the headline and introduction was important (Nygren and Hök, 2016: 273).

When it comes to the dominant actor in the coverage, it can be seen that it was most often the Russian authorities (see Tab. 3.10). This is interesting, since this entity was not the most quoted actor, and it took only a fourth position among all of the quoted entities in the research material (see Tab. 3.2). In addition, by comparing the visibility of the Russian authorities as the dominant and the secondary actor to the number of references to their statements, it can be noted that the journalists wrote more about the Kremlin than they quoted it. In the case of how the dominant actor was covered, the Russian authorities were usually assessed negatively. This is also the second highest rate among all negatively rated entities. Only the rebels, with almost twelve percentage points of difference, were covered more negatively. However, it should be remembered that the total amount of times that the rebels were covered as the dominant actor was less than half as many as in the case of the Russian authorities. As a result, the number of negative research units about rebels was over 40 materials lower than in the case of the Russian authorities. It also should be noted that the Russian military was presented with a mostly negative tone.

Taking into account the number of times Russia was the dominant actor, it can be seen that it is evaluated far worse than the Ukrainian side. Only two percent of the time, Ukrainian political actors were presented negatively. In one case it was an article from early March on Viktor Yanukovych, who criticized the Ukrainian authorities and announced his return to the country to fight against fascism (*Super Express*, "Yanukovych wants to fight against fascism", 12/03/2014). The article itself was also critical of the former president of Ukraine. The Ukrainian side – authorities, military and citizens – were mainly assessed in a neutral way (Tab. 3.10). "International politicians", "other foreign actors in the conflict", or "Polish citizens" and "Polish authorities" were also presented in a neutral manner. However, it is noteworthy that the "civilians in the conflict area" by taking into account the percentage of positive indications, were rated the best among the mentioned dominant actors. This may be due to the fact that they were in the center of the conflict, and at the same time had to bear the biggest losses. Especially Fakty drew attention to this by publishing, for example, materials about the evacuation of Ukrainian citizens to Poland. Just behind the civilians, "Polish authorities", "Ukrainian military" and "Ukrainian authorities" were covered the most positively. Therefore it can be said that among the dominant actors, the pro-Ukrainian perspective is stronger than the pro-Russian one, which confirms the first research hypothesis. Although the tone of the materials with the Ukrainian side as the main subject was usually neutral, the high negativity towards the rebels and Russia is not without significance.

Tab. 3.10: *Dominant actor (in percent).*

	Positively	Neutral	Negatively	N=
Polish authorities	15	78	7	239
Polish citizens	6	89	5	39
Ukrainian authorities	12	86	2	121
Ukrainian military	20	80	0	100
Ukrainian citizens	7	93	0	30
Civilians in the conflict area	20	33	47	30
Rebels	0	19	81	221
Russian authorities	1	30	69	477
Russian military	1	31	68	68
Russian citizens	0	75	25	11
International politicians	6	90	4	233
Other foreign actors in the conflict	5	85	10	93
Other	8	84	8	64
Total	106	893	614	1726

Source: Author

It is worth noting that the negative way that the Russian side was presented was mainly noticeable at the level of political actors and the army, and to a much lesser extent at the level of the civilians. This may be because the official actors, and not the whole society, were considered as a party to the conflict, since they made real decisions about it. This is in line with the rhetoric presented by the media. Moreover, the Russian authorities were mostly personified by Putin. According to Kabel, this is a generally observed phenomenon in the Western media (2017: 8). When he analyzed the coverage of Russia by the Danish media, he also found that Putin was very often portrayed in that way (2017: 35). However, the Danish researcher pointed out that Putin personified the whole Russian nation (2017), but that was not the case in the Polish media's coverage of the conflict in Ukraine. The President of the Russian Federation was in fact perceived by the Polish media as one of the parties to the conflict. It was *Super Express* who most often depicted the Russian politicians, including President Putin, in a negative way. The strong negativity toward Vladimir Putin was expressed in the titles and the content – examples include such articles as “Putin feeds on fear and weakness” (*Super Express*, 03/03/2014), “Putin is laughing in the world's face” (*Super Express*, 05/03/2014), “Putin's aggressive policy results from his desperation” (*Super Express*, 22/04/2014) and “Putin will provoke Ukraine” (*Super Express*, 16/02/2015). Content on

this topic also appeared in the pages of *Rzeczpospolita* and *Gazeta Wyborcza*. However, there was less of it there than in *Super Express*. *Gazeta Wyborcza* had the headlines: “Putin adds to the fire of war” (16/06/2014), “Putin’s entry in Stalin’s style” (18/03/2015), “Putin violates Ukraine” (07/03/2014), and *Rzeczpospolita* had: “Brotherly help: how Putin attacked Crimea” (10/03/2015), “It’s not Putin’s last row” (01/07/2014). As can be read from the titles, most of the materials referred to Russian aggression toward Ukraine, and thus to the lack of respect for international law. Importantly, these articles indicate quite clearly that Vladimir Putin himself is responsible for the situation in Eastern Europe. The pictures were also used as an interesting tool that could strengthen the negative image of the Russian president. The use of pictures in this way was especially noticeable in tabloids, which could be the result of the style of those media outlets (see Pictures 3.7 and 3.8).



Picture 3.7: “Putin has sick head and atom bombs”.

Source: *Super Express*, 8-9/03/2014



Picture 3.8: “West sells Ukraine”.

Source: *Fakt*, 04/03/2014

On the cover of *Super Express* with the headline “Putin has a sick head and atom bombs” (8-9/03/2014) (see Picture 3.7), the Russian president looks like a madman who is ready to do anything, including using nuclear weapons in Ukraine. This is illustrated in the background of the photo, which shows an atomic bomb cloud over an unknown city. An equally interesting photograph

has been added to one of the *Fakt* articles. The article entitled “West sells Ukraine” (*Fakt*, 04/03/2014) (see Picture 3.8) presents Putin as a bear sitting on a throne with three defenseless rabbits symbolizing Germany, France and the United States at his feet. In the case of this photograph, one should pay attention to two elements – the dominant position, impunity and untrustworthiness of Russia, and the West’s inability to oppose the Russian aggression. Both photographs, just like the presented headlines, underline Putin’s role in the conflict, pointing him out as a provocateur of events in Ukraine. Interestingly, in the case of materials about the Ukrainian or Polish authorities, more than one person would symbolize and represent these countries. Of course, this may be related to the nature of the political regimes in these countries, which in comparison to the Russian regime are less concentrated to one leader. According to Kabel, this trait of the Russian regime, where Putin takes a central role, may explain why he to such a great degree personifies Russia in the media coverage (2017: 41). This is an important variable that strongly affects the coverage perspective, as well as the perception of the material. Portraying Putin negatively and pointing to his unpredictable behavior may stem from the fact that in this way the Russian president was made the embodiment of the nation-wide fear presented by the media, which according to Lynch is something that journalists frequently do to actors considered as the enemy (2014: 57). In addition, paying a lot of attention to Russia’s president is a confirmation that the conflict in the media’s view is not a dispute between the separatists, Ukraine, and Russia – understood as the whole country. This is more seen as a conflict between Ukraine, the separatists and Putin. It can be said that Putin – similar to Saddam Hussein and Osama Bin Laden (Epkins, 2016) – was simultaneously portrayed as a personification of evil, as well as the personification of the national enemy.

A secondary actor was coded only in the case of its actual presence in the material. It was included in 1 495 research units, which is 87 percent of the analyzed material. Russian authorities also appeared most often among the group of secondary actors (see Tab. 3.11). Similarly as in the case of the dominant actors, also this time they were assessed as the second most negatively perceived entity, just after the rebels. However, it is important to point out that 39 percent of evaluations about Russian politicians were neutral. It is by nine percentage points more than in the case of the dominant actors. Therefore, it can be said that the Russian authorities are described better as a secondary actor than as the dominant actor. The personification of the Kremlin by Putin is also noticeable at the level of the second actor, but it is definitely lower than in the case of the main character of the material. The situation looks similar in the case of the

rebels. The pro-Russian separatists were assessed negatively by over twelve percentage points less than in the case of the dominant actor. They were assessed mainly in the context of the MH17 disaster, and the impact of their actions on civilians. A good example is the article from *Super Express* entitled "Inhuman war kills children" (26/01/2015), where the journalist wrote about the victims of fighting going on in Donbass and Mariupol. The author of the text emphasizes that as a result of the separatists' attack on one of the Mariupol districts, 30 people died including two children. In addition, the photo attached to the text depicts a child who died in the Donbass now lying in a coffin. This may also constitute a negative reinforcement of the material, especially since the words "separatists" and "kills children" are bolded. This makes the reader pay more attention to these words and as a result perceive the text and the described actors in a certain way (Zelizer, 2004). *Gazeta Wyborcza* also wrote about separatists in the context of the negative impact of war on society. The article "Mariupol comes back to life" (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, 21–22/06/2014), describes the rebuilding of the city after the June battles fought by the Ukrainian army and the rebels. The article shows not only the damage caused by taking the city back from the hands of the rebels, but also criticized the way it was taken. The author also discusses the internal problems of Ukraine, which could have allowed the situation to take place. Still, the Ukrainian side is perceived better than the pro-Russian, although the percentage of negative references to Ukrainians is a bit higher than in the group of dominant actors. Polish authorities and citizens as well as international actors are also assessed mainly neutrally. In the case of Russian citizens, the score is evenly distributed between neutral and negative evaluations, but it is worth noting that they were described as the secondary actors only twice. Therefore, it cannot be significant for the final evaluation of their activities.

The category "other" for both the secondary and the dominant actor was mainly rated neutrally. The number of references to "other" as the second actor is slightly higher than in the case of the dominant actor. However, compared to other entities, especially parties to the conflict or Polish authorities, this category was chosen relatively rarely. If they were evaluated negatively, they were for example unpopular historical figures, just like in the text "Resurrection of the wraiths" (*Rzeczpospolita*, 05/03/2015), where the category included Hitler and Stalin.

Tab. 3.11: *Secondary actor (in percent).*

	Positively	Neutral	Negatively	N=
Polish authorities	9	90	1	172
Polish citizens	7	93	0	27
Ukrainian authorities	10	89	1	195
Ukrainian military	7	91	2	95
Ukrainian citizens	16	84	0	19
Civilians in the conflict area	0	100	0	19
Rebels	1	30	69	191
Russian authorities	0	39	61	378
Russian military	0	34	66	58
Russian citizens	0	50	50	2
International politicians	2	89	9	189
Other foreign actors in the conflict	5	83	12	58
Other	3	92	5	91
Total	61	1001	432	1494

Source: Author

3.3.2 The main coverage perspective and contexts

How the dominant and the secondary actor were presented in the research material showed that the Russian side and rebels were assessed much more negatively than the Ukrainian actors (see Tab. 3.10 and Tab. 3.11). Therefore, it is assumed that the coverage perspective developed in the same way. The variable dedicated to these issues has been divided into seven smaller categories. As in the case of the dominant and the secondary actor, the division into politicians, the army and neutral responses was applied. The variable “support for Ukraine in general” was added, which also included support for the civilian population, and was related with the general sympathy towards Ukraine noticeable in the materials. It was decided to apply this solution in the international project, mainly due to the fact that it was Ukraine who was the victim in this dispute. Therefore, it was assumed that the tone of the material may contain this type of connotation. The perspectives were coded based on the general impression of the analyzed content, including the title and visual materials. It was decided that if the article critically refers to one side, for example to the Russian authorities, it means that it shows support for the Ukrainian perspective (Nygren and Hök, 2016: 272).

The content analysis indicated that the pro-Ukrainian perspective was indeed dominant in the Polish media's coverage of the conflict (see Tab. 3.12). Seventy five percent of the materials had a pro-Ukrainian perspective, which was divided into three categories in the code book. It is worth noting that "support for Ukraine in general" was the dominant perspective, which may mean that the media did not differentiate so much between supporting the Ukrainian authorities or the army. It may also be related to the high negativity of Russian politicians, troops, and rebels among the dominant and secondary actors. Interestingly, almost none of the analyzed media, apart from *Gazeta Wyborcza*, ever showed support for Russia and the rebels. However, when it did happen it was largely connected with materials critical to the Ukrainian government, rather than any direct support for Russian activities in the conflict area. Distinguishing between different media, it can be seen that the pro-Ukrainian perspective was particularly strong in *Super Express* and *Gazeta Wyborcza* (see Tab. 3.12). *Wiadomości TVP1* also strongly emphasized their support for Ukraine. In the case of tabloids, the situation may be the result of a strong criticism of Vladimir Putin, because the Russian authorities were perceived by *Super Express* as the worst among the covered dominant actors. This might be related to the fact that Putin was blamed for the economic sanctions imposed on Poland, which is one of the consequences of the dispute that *Super Express* along with *Fakt* often reported on (see Tab. 3.1). The pro-Ukrainian perspective visible in *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Wiadomości TVP1* may stem from the rhetoric presented by the Polish government, which in the analyzed time period was the Civic Platform party. It is assumed that this party is conditionally supported by *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2011: 109) while the public broadcaster, due to its strong connections with the state, is usually a relay of the opinions of the authorities. Considering the involvement of the government in solving the Ukrainian crisis, as well as the fact that Poland has been punished with a Russian embargo for supporting Ukraine, it is not surprising that the pro-Ukrainian perspective was very strong in the broadcasts of the Polish Television. A similar situation can be seen in the case of *Rzeczpospolita*. This newspaper presented "Russian invasion" as the main cause of the outbreak of the conflict (see Tab. 3.5). Therefore, the lack of support for the pro-Russian perspective from this medium is understandable. These presented data confirm the accuracy of the first research hypothesis.

One could say, that when presenting the pro-Ukrainian perspective, which as mentioned before was also promoted by the government, *Wiadomości TVP1* acts as a propagandist. According to Ross (2007), this is one of the roles that

the media might take during war, which is also confirmed by Galtung (2006). On the other hand, Polish politicians were not the most quoted source of information for this medium (see Tab. 3.2), although they were also quite frequently quoted, coming in second place after their Ukrainian counterparts. However, as Wanta has written (2012), the media in some states cover conflicts in alignment with the foreign policy of their government, which may explain why Russia was portrayed negatively and Ukraine positively.

The results of the content analysis including the main perspective of the materials showed that a kind of national consensus was visible in all analyzed media, which manifested itself in a strong support for the Ukrainian side and criticism of pro-Russian and Russian actors. This brings the Polish media close to Hallin's sphere of consensus, where all participants of the public debate are in agreement (1986). There seems to be a fixed way of perceiving the parties to the conflict, which has its basis in history. Of course, a large portion of the research units, especially those presented by *Fakt* and *Fakty TVN*, had a neutral tone, but the pro-Ukrainian perspective is still more frequent. Therefore, taking the side of one of the parties to the conflict was more common in the coverage than taking a neutral position (see Tab. 3.12).

Tab. 3.12: *The main coverage perspective (in percent).*

	<i>Fakt</i>	<i>Super Express</i>	<i>Gazeta Wyborcza</i>	<i>Rzeczpospolita</i>	Wiadomości TVP1	Fakty TVN	Total
Support for Ukraine in general	24	55	39	41	71	36	45
Support for Ukrainian authorities	22	30	26	22	4	18	21
Support for Ukrainian army	15	11	12	8	4	6	9
Support for Russian authorities	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Support for Russian army	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Support for separatists	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Neutral	39	4	22	29	21	40	25
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N=	170	206	438	385	294	233	1726

Source: Author

The dominant position of the pro-Ukrainian perspective may somewhat be the result of technical factors, such as topic selection, access to sources and the hybrid nature of the dispute. It is worth noting that the lack of foreign correspondents in Ukraine and general difficulties in getting contact with some of the parties to the dispute could have affected the shape and, above all, the perception of the content presented by the media. The topic selection and terminology used to describe the events in Ukraine was also not without significance. However, as confirmed by journalists, they had almost total freedom in this regard. Therefore, it seems interesting to check why the pro-Ukrainian consensus in the coverage of the conflict by Polish mainstream media was so noticeable. In order to get an answer to this question, the journalists from the analyzed media outlets were asked how they would describe their role in the dispute – if they were neutral observers, or if they maybe felt emotional involvement with one of the sides. The content analysis showed that the journalists played both roles, but that a certain bias prevailed. One reason for this is the fact that it was Ukraine who was a victim in this conflict, and the media obviously had a defensive attitude towards the victim of the war (see Taradai, 2014: 74; Nohrstedt, 2009: 109):

“The sympathy from Poles towards the Ukrainians, especially during the clash with the Russians, is definitely on the Ukrainian side. It was difficult to be impartial in a dispute in which we have obvious aggression from one side, as in the case of Crimea and Donbass.” [R3]

Treating Ukraine as a victim, which it de facto was, made it difficult for the journalists to look critically at the actions of this state that had to defend itself against both external and internal aggression. It can be said that the Polish journalists in this way recognized the Ukrainian side as the “worthy” victim of this war. According to Herman and Chomsky (1988), this can be apparent, for example, in how the media focus on the losses suffered by only one side of the conflict. The examples of media materials described qualitatively in this chapter seem to confirm this theory. It seems that the respondents felt an emotional bond with the Ukrainians, which in the case of some of the analyzed media seemed particularly important, which is confirmed by the *Fakt* journalist:

“There were problems related to the involvement and the fact that I simply sympathize with these Ukrainians. This helped, that I was not indifferent to them, that I was involved in the subject, because it is good if the text is a little bit more emotional.” [R1]

The emotional style of the tabloid articles, in particular drawing attention to the consequences of the conflict for Poland, or the impact of the dispute on civilians

living close to the front, meant that the perspective took a pro-Ukrainian form in advance. At the same time, the presence of Russia in the dispute was also significant. The journalists noted that patterns of ideas about the states participating in the conflict, developed in the past, could have made an impact on the coverage. Therefore, although some respondents tried to be neutral, their origin and certain way of thinking could pose an obstacle, which is confirmed by one respondent:

“If I want to do something for my country, I can inform the citizens well and objectively about what is happening. Only with a solid knowledge they can create their own opinion. I understand it this way, but of course some sympathies or dislikes resulting from in which country we were brought up, probably have some influence on it.” [R10]

Indeed, the conditions mentioned by the TVP1 journalist could have had a significant effect on the perspective that was visible in the materials. On the one hand, it could be related to the general lack of trust by the pro-Russian side to Polish and Western journalists, as described in the earlier subsections. On the other hand, it could have been the result of certain ideas created in the past, such as national stereotypes (see Ottosen, 1995; Goffman, 1974). Paying attention to these issues is especially important from the point of view of Russia's assessment because, according to one of the respondents, the negative attitude towards Russians is a kind of Polish national feature:

“It is not without significance, whether we are ashamed of it or not, but we are Russophobic. I mean Poles as a society, as a nation. The fact that this proverbial “Rusek” [Russian] is the bad guy again also faces our view.” [R11]

The aggressive actions of Russia, especially in the context of historical events, and thus turning on national stereotypes in the respondent's mind, could play an important role in presenting what was happening in Ukraine. This is due to the fact that journalists are part of a certain society and, therefore, their perception of issues and entities can be predetermined (see Russ-Mohl, 2013; McNair, 1988). That is why, according to the journalist, the perspective presented by the mainstream media was more anti- than pro-Russian:

“The fact that Poles are Russophobic means that people who work in the media are Russophobic. This one-sided, dramatically pro-Ukrainian coverage, resulted also from this. According to me, it is without a doubt, that many journalists, even those from the quality media, wrote materials based on one-party relations. They wrote information by choosing facts, so that the pronunciation of the text would fit to the editorial line. The line was that the Russians are bad and that they are the invaders.” [R11]

Interestingly, although most journalists pointed out that they autonomously selected topics, while looking at the dominant tone of the coverage, it can

be seen that the general trend of presenting the dispute remained almost the same. Therefore, despite the existence of differences between the analyzed media at the level of the editorial line or business model, they operate the same in the case of describing the dispute. This may be due to the Russophobia mentioned by the respondent, but also according to the *Rzeczpospolita* columnist such behavior might be the result of the general construction of a professional environment:

“This is not a question of pro- or anti-Russianness of the Polish media. One of my colleagues once said that the Polish journalist is a heard animal and unfortunately he was right. The journalist cannot walk in the herd. Meanwhile, these mainstream media work like that.” [R6]

Despite the fact that the respondent openly admitted that sometimes he could hardly keep to his professional objectivity, it was confirmed by the conducted research that he is not the only one. Therefore, it is really possible to talk about a kind of general consensus between the Polish media in how they covered the events in Ukraine. Interestingly, the journalists realize that they do not act in a neutral way, but many authors have claimed that in the case of war journalism, it is simply impossible (see Tumber, 2004; Ross, 2003; Gamson et al., 1992), and in the case of this conflict being an impartial observer could definitely be more difficult than in other wars and disputes. One of the reasons for this is the earlier mentioned geographic proximity of Ukraine and the possibility of the dispute moving over to Poland. The geopolitical factor is then important. On the other hand, historical and cultural issues, and thus sometimes xenophobic attitudes towards the Russian side, could also have caused that Russia's activity was negatively perceived in advance. Therefore, an important factor that influenced the final shape of the coverage was also the presence of historical and geopolitical contexts in the materials. These issues, like the terminology used to describe the conflict, have a specific meaning (see Lee, 2005; Gurevitch et al., 1995). That is why the way they are interpreted may determine the overall perception of the dispute and its sides. This is due to the fact that these contexts can turn on certain mechanisms that cause the audience to see and understand some issues in a predetermined manner. These factors were present in the coverage (see Tab. 3.13).

Tab. 3.13: *Dominant historical and geopolitical context used in the story (in percent).*

	<i>Fakt</i>	<i>Super Express</i>	<i>Gazeta Wyborcza</i>	<i>Rzeczpospolita</i>	Wiadomości TVP1	Fakty TVN	Total
Fear of Russian expansion	35	28	46	33	55	16	38
Fear of lack of NATO reaction	6	8	3	5	0	1	3
Contemporary Ukrainian struggle for belonging to Europe	10	13	4	5	4	14	7
Historical struggle for national independence of Ukraine	5	16	26	40	34	41	30
Struggle for Russian power, values and culture in history	3	12	3	0	0	3	4
Struggle for Russian power, values and culture today	35	21	14	16	7	25	16
Struggle against fascism during WWII	0	0	2	0	0	0	1
War between West and East	6	2	2	1	0	0	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N=	124	178	341	255	278	159	1378

Source: Author

Among the eight mentioned contexts, the “fear of Russian expansion” was the most common. This context was particularly noticeable in the case of *Wiadomości TVP1*, *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Fakt* materials (see Tab. 3.13). Other media used it to a slightly lesser extent. The journalists, when asked about what issues generated social interest in the conflict, drew attention to two factors. One of them was the proximity of the conflict to the Polish borders, and the other was Russia’s involvement in the dispute. Since this country is usually perceived by Poles through the prism of the Polish Partitions, the Second World War and the era of communism, it is not surprising that the fear of Russia could have been used as one of the frames of the coverage. Using such factors could have increased the negative perception of Russia, which was reflected in the main perspective of the coverage (see Tab. 3.12) and in the image of the dominant and secondary actors (see Tab. 3.10 and 3.11). It also made the audience more interested in the conflict, something that was noticed by the *Fakt* journalist:

“The case of Russia’s involvement and these eternal fears about what the Russians will do, if they would threaten us in some way, made this conflict interesting.” [R2]

Referring to the threat of Russian expansion, especially in a time when this country is waging war with Poland’s immediate neighbor, could have caused recipients to follow the media’s reports with greater interest. In addition, it could trigger certain factors, such as the previously mentioned national stereotypes, which influenced the decoding of information in a certain way. In this case anti-Russian. This may be, therefore, an expression of Russophobia, which was mentioned by one of the respondents. On the other hand, the proximity of the dispute generated real motives related to the fear of Poland’s Eastern borders being violated, so it is understandable that journalists wrote about these issues. However, everything depended on what arguments were made and what image of the conflict was presented to the audience. The results of the content analysis show that the media used historical rhetoric, at the same time pointing out the unlawfulness and aggression of the actions taken by Russia and the rebels. That is why the media messages could thus foster fear of similar events in Poland, especially since these issues, for example in the context of needing to modernize the army, were discussed at the political level. Paying attention to the extent to which the conflict in Ukraine was brought closer to the national audience in the sense of its impact on Poland will be presented in the next chapter.

It is worth noting that in the case of *Rzeczpospolita* and Fakty TVN, the most important way to explain the dispute was to draw attention to the “historical struggle for national independence of Ukraine”. The use of this type of frame may have come from the fact that, according to the quality newspaper, the conflict in Ukraine was the result of a Russian invasion (see Tab. 3.5). Therefore, it can be said that the quality newspaper journalists’ perception of Ukraine as a victim affected the coverage. In that way the concept of the “worthy” victim (Herman and Chomsky, 1988) might have been somehow supplemented by increasing sympathy and identification by Poles with the Ukrainians. Indeed, this topic was pointed out in the material entitled “Russia attacks Ukraine”, which was described in one of the earliest subsections. Supporting Ukraine in defending its statehood could be the result of similar historical fates, especially since both Ukraine and Poland have been strongly dependent from Russia. This could have caused that especially *Rzeczpospolita* emphasized the independence factor in the coverage, which at the same time influenced social interest, as well as understanding information in a specific way. This is confirmed by the statement of the journalist who collaborated with *Rzeczpospolita* during the research period:

“Poles were interested in Ukraine, because they could find there some of the elements important to them. In the case of the Crimea there was also a Russian factor, so it is known that Poles and Russians...Even revolutionary and historically there are some issues that allowed the Poles to absorb the knowledge and information they received more easily.” [R7]

Easy absorption of information, especially based on the use of specific frames, and thus the presence of Russia in the dispute, as in the case of the dominant context of the coverage, could cause that the recipients of certain media agreed with their views. At the same time they could adopt the journalistic perspective as their own. This is interesting, because the media do not function in a vacuum, therefore their external environment, including social and political factors, influence the way they act. The journalists confirmed that elements such as origin as well as historical and cultural patterns could have affected the way they covered the conflict. It is difficult to determine unequivocally the extent to which media discourse has affected social discourse and vice versa, especially since journalists are members of a specific society. That is why the perspective presented by the media could only be a reflection of the moods prevailing among the public at that time. On the other hand, the high negativity towards Russia, especially by political actors, and the respondents' confirmation that this is the result of factors rooted in the national consciousness, raises the question of whether the anti-Russian perspective is only and exclusively the result of the Ukrainian conflict. However, focusing only on this event has shown that the image of the dispute in the mainstream media's coverage is strongly pro-Ukrainian, and that the Polish media spoke with one voice when describing the conflict in Ukraine.

Summary

The coverage of the conflict in Ukraine by the Polish mainstream media was characterized by condemnation of Russia's and the pro-Russian rebels' actions, as well as support for Ukraine in the struggle to preserve its sovereignty. That perspective, to a greater or lesser extent, was accepted by all examined media, which may be the result of the strong involvement of domestic politicians in solving the dispute on the eastern border of Poland. Therefore, it can be said that the media, despite the differences at the level of political parallelism, supported the vision of the ruling party, sometimes trying to impose harsher actions in response to Russian aggression. Elements such as media format, ownership and popularity did not seem to play a significant role in how the conflict was covered. A national perspective on the parties to the conflict, especially Russia, seems to have been

more important – which confirms that factors such as national prejudices and stereotypes affected journalists in their work.

The Polish angle played an important role in how the dispute was presented. It was visible both among the most presented issues and sources of information. Polish politicians were the most quoted actors, and the most covered issues in the quality media were international political discussion and sanctions, while the consequences of the conflict for Poland were described more often by tabloids. Although the most frequently presented topics point to the importance of context-oriented factors in the coverage, the way they are used seems to be connected to the media format. International political discussions and sanctions were often related to analytical, for example economic, issues, which made it the most frequently presented topic by *Rzeczpospolita*, which is profiled in this way. In turn, tabloids referring to the consequences of the dispute for Poland presented this issue in a mainly emotional way – for example through stoking fear of Russia's actions – and also in a sensational way, as exemplified by the photographs used by *Fakt* and *Super Express*. Most importantly, the most frequently described topics usually referred to the negative actions of Russia and the separatists, and to a lesser extent to the actions of the Ukrainians. That is, when the sanctions were discussed, in most of the cases it was connected with the necessity to condemn the activities of the Russian Federation and taking actions at the international level to resolve the dispute. In the case of the consequences of the conflict for Poland, for example, concerns about Russian aggression were referred to. Therefore, it can be said that the Polish coverage of the conflict was anti-Russian.

The results of the content analysis as well as the interviews with journalists confirm the first research hypothesis, which said that the media presented an anti-Russian perspective of the conflict. This was noticeable both in the low number of quotations of the Russian side compared to the Ukrainian party of the conflict, as well as in the negative assessment of political actors and army. Finally, the domination of the pro-Ukrainian perspective of the dispute confirms that journalists did not evaluate the parties to the conflict in the same way. This means that they did not act as neutral observers when they covered the conflict in Ukraine, which seems to accurately reflect the Nygren model (Nygren and Hök, 2016: 261). Naturally, the journalists claimed that they tried to give voice to the other side, but the content analysis shows that the media gave strong support to one side of the conflict – Ukraine – while criticizing the actions of the rebels and Russia. *Super Express* and Wiadomości TVP1 provided particularly strong support. The public television channel could in this way have reflected the pro-Ukrainian attitude of the then government. The tabloid's perspective

can probably be connected to the topic it most often covered – the negative consequences of the dispute for Poland. The pro-Ukrainian perspective could also simply have resulted from wanting to support the victim who in this dispute happened to be Ukraine, which was indicated in the way the conflict and its causes were defined. The geopolitical and historical contexts in the material were equally important, especially the fear of Russian expansion, which may be an answer to why journalists were not fully objective in the coverage of the conflict.

The empirical data presented will be helpful in understanding why and to what extent the conflict in Ukraine could have been domesticated by the Polish media. The presence of a Polish angle in the coverage, especially at the level of most frequently presented topics and contexts used, shows that the journalists referred to meaning that can be decoded in an appropriate way by the audience. Therefore, in the next chapter attention will be paid to the presence of historical contexts and the economic and military threat for Poland, because these issues could have caused the conflict in Ukraine to be perceived by the audience and the media as “our dispute”. Therefore, in the next part of the empirical work, the results of reports made by the Centre for Public Opinion Research will be presented, which show to what extent events in Ukraine were perceived by the public as a direct threat to Poland. Thanks to this, it will be possible to notice whether the media discourse coincided with the social discourse or not. Although the way the conflict was presented by the media in Ukraine was somewhat consistent with political discourse, I will try to examine how political issues, especially the impact of the conflict on the actions of political actors, were presented by the media. In the end, I will try to get an answer to the question of whether in the opinion of journalists the information they presented could have an impact on the decisions of political actors regarding the conflict.

4 The analysis of the domestication of the conflict

Domestication, which can be defined as a media technique serving to strengthen the ties between recipients and a foreign event, was noticeable in the coverage (see Hjarvard, 2001; Taradai, 2014). The content analysis showed that the material contained frames and contexts that could make the information more understandable, meaningful and important for the Polish audience. Regionalism also plays a huge role in this, because the media and the public are much more interested in information from countries which are known to them (Wu, 2000) – historically and culturally (Lee et al., 2017: 906) – and which are closely located (Wilke et al., 2013). Russia and Ukraine meet these conditions. Therefore, it was possible for the media to make content that could easily be decoded by domestic recipients (Taradai, 2014: 68).

The analysis showed that news about Ukraine contained Polish angles, which could be observed in the dominant topics (see Tab. 3.1) and sources of information (see Tab. 3.2). It is worth remembering that domestic political actors had the highest amount of quotations among the sources used in the coverage. The Ukrainian crisis was also often discussed by the government, which was reflected in the media content. Therefore, the recipients had reason to think that the conflict affected them and that to some extent it was also “their” dispute. Moreover, Ukraine is inhabited by Poles or people of Polish descent, and some of them were evacuated by the authorities from Eastern Ukraine during the conflict (Wojciechowski, 2015). The threat to Polish citizens was also a factor that could be used by the media to show the consequences of the conflict for the country. It was also an element that generated interest and a connection between the information and the audience.

Domesticating the described events is also interesting due to how it affects the overall coverage perspective. The conducted analysis showed that the dispute was presented in a way that supported the Ukrainian side (see Tab. 3.12). This side could be seen as closer to “we” than “they”. This may be because of several factors – Poland’s support for Ukraine in joining the European Union, Polish citizens living in Ukraine and similar historical experiences, especially with the Russian Federation. When it comes to domestication, it is important to make news consistent with the beliefs and ideology of the state in question (Gurevitch et al., 1991). Therefore the value element is significant. Considering the fact that some of the respondents spoke about Russophobia in the media, this element

might be important during the conflict domestication. It is worth noting that references to specific historical events, especially when one of the parties to the conflict is Russia, could also be interpreted as xenophobic. This was also noticeable in the dominant historical and geopolitical contexts in the coverage (see Tab. 3.13).

The coverage perspective may depend on who in fact decides what issues and what tone the coverage will present. The interviewed journalists noted that they did not feel pressure when choosing topics. Therefore, they decided what information should be known to the audience. This is a fairly common phenomenon (Lee et al., 2017: 906). However, it should be remembered that foreign publications can be translated through the prism of specific frames and contexts resulting from the national or cultural identity of a journalist (see Clausen, 2004; Riegert, 2011). That is why the Russian-Ukrainian conflict was presented differently by media from the different countries that participated in the project “Ukraine 2014 – media war and the war in media” (Nygren and Hök, 2016). It should be noted that journalists who are members of a specific community can, as shown by the research, reproduce perceptions of “others” that are common in that community. That is why examining to what extent the Polish media used semantic mechanisms to bring the conflict closer to the audience is important. This can help determine if domesticating factors have influenced the overall perspective of the coverage.

4.1 Impact of historical references

According to Gurevitch et al. (1991: 195–216), combining historical, cultural and ideological factors increases the effectiveness of domestication. The media do not have to produce the necessary connections themselves – instead they can use existing ones. Both history and culture are durable things, being passed down from generation to generation and leaving traces in the memory of the individuals and the community to which they belong (Czyżewski, 2010). Putting information in a context helps the audience adopt a particular perspective. This is especially interesting, because the Polish journalists in fact tried to explain the causes of the dispute through the prism of history, and they also pointed to events that Poland participated in. Earlier analyzes carried out by Polish scholars show that this has happened before in other contexts (see Szostok et al., 2016; Laboratorium Badań Medioznawczych, 2017a), and this indicates that there is a kind of nationwide practice of the Polish media of using historical frames to show the audience how to decode the news story (see Taradai, 2012; Winston et al., 2010). This is extremely interesting considering the fact that the parties to

the conflict are Russia and Ukraine, which share a common history with Poland. Therefore, the journalists had the opportunity to choose between many different historical events to serve as a frames. They could also be sure that the domestic audience would understand the implications of these references.

4.1.1 Frequency of historical references

The content analysis showed that 14 percent of all research units contained references to historical events, which is every seventh unit (see Tab. 4.1.). This shows that the media quite often referred to historical comparisons and that historical proximity was an important element of the coverage (see Chyliński and Russ-Mohl, 2008; Kempf, 2012). This may have resulted from the fact that the journalists wanted the recipients to be able to recognize some issues. In that way, they could see the analogy between past events and what was happening in Ukraine. Thanks to this it was possible to implicate which side in this conflict is actually the aggressor and how it should be evaluated (see Tab. 4.2). Moreover, using historical frames could increase the audience's interest in the dispute. According to the *Fakt* journalist, not only geographic proximity, but also the fact that “we are strongly culturally and historically connected with Ukraine” [R2], could have influenced the Poles' interest in keeping up with the media reports. This is a confirmation that domesticating the conflict by referring to the examined factors, which are also a kind of context-oriented factors (see Chang et al., 1987; Shoemaker and Cohen, 2006; Zerback and Holzleitner, 2018), could be a successful strategy – especially when it was used by mainstream media that reach a wide audience and influence other media's content. The analyzed media belong to this group (see Kurdupski 2016a; Kurdupski, 2016b; Instytut Monitoringu Mediów, 2014; Instytut Monitoringu Mediów, 2015).

Tab. 4.1: *Material related to historical issues (in percent).*

	<i>Fakt</i>	<i>Super Express</i>	<i>Gazeta Wyborcza</i>	<i>Rzeczpospolita</i>	Wiadomości TVP1	Fakty TVN	Total
Yes	15	21	16	17	10	6	14
No	85	79	84	83	90	94	86
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N=	170	206	438	385	294	233	1726

Source: Author

The greatest amount of historical references was found in quality newspapers and tabloids (see Tab. 4.1.), which as mentioned earlier seems to be a kind of common trend in the Polish media, especially in the press (see Szostok et al., 2016; Laboratorium Badań Medioznawczych, 2017a; Głowacki and Smolak, 2016). Also, Wiadomości TVP1 more often than Fakty TVN put historical frames into their materials. The reason for this may be the dominant coverage perspective (see Tab. 3.12). TVN presented the dispute in Ukraine the most neutrally of the analyzed media. Forty percent of its segments were unbiased (see Tab. 3.12). Therefore, it can also be expected that TVN used historical frames to a lesser degree than the other media, which were much more pro-Ukrainian. The Fakty TVN journalist, when asked about the extent to which historical factors affected the coverage of the dispute, answered that “it absolutely did not have any greater significance” [R8]. That is why only 16 out of Fakty’s TVN 233 materials about Ukraine contained references to the past, and most of these were found in quotations and not the journalist’s own words.

To a not much lesser extent than Fakty TVN – with a difference of only one percentage point – *Fakt* also presented the story in a neutral way. However, the tabloid profile of this paper made historical and cultural references tools of sensationalism. It seems that this might have increased the recipients’ interest in the content. A good example is the article entitled “A replay of September 17, 1939 awaits us” (*Fakt*, 05/04/2014). The *Fakt* journalist, while referring to the annexation of Crimea and the invasion of Russian troops in Ukraine, criticizes the lack of decisive action by NATO and the European Union. At the same time, he writes that the aggression of the Russian Federation, allegedly defending the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine, may also be transferred to the Baltic States and Poland. The journalist outlines an almost complete Russian invasion of Poland over the next few years, and sees a possible agreement on dividing the country with Germany. Of course, this article has a fantastic character, and historical facts are also altered, but the contexts used are so clear that they allow for comparisons to World War II. The title itself is a fairly clear message that directs the recipient’s attention to the possibility of the conflict coming to Poland. *Fakt* presented that scenario relatively frequently (see Tab. 4.7). Therefore, the quoted article is an interesting example of how tabloids, using both history and the fear of Russian expansion, could domesticate the dispute. This is additionally strengthened by the fact that Poles have similar historical experiences with the USSR as those described in the material. Therefore, it can be seen that the material is obviously biased and at the same time sensational. That is why the media type could also have influenced the extent to which references to the past appeared in the content.

It is worth remembering that the quality media, particularly the opinion dailies, used historical issues to explain the background of the conflict and its impact on Poland. This was noticeable in one *Rzeczpospolita* article – “Poland is trying to get alliance guarantees” (03/04/2014). It refers to the meeting of Polish ministers and opposition leaders with the then Prime Minister Donald Tusk. The meeting was dedicated to the situation in Ukraine and the need to take action at the international level to stop Russia’s aggression and ensure the security of Poland and the Baltic States. The article referred to President Lech Kaczyński’s words from 2008 – that after the Russian attack on Georgia, it is the Baltic countries and Poland’s turn (*Rzeczpospolita*, 03/04/2014). Recalling the situation during the Russo-Georgian war and making a comparison to the events in Ukraine, especially in the context of possible aggression on Poland, is a kind of domestication. However, drawing attention to the military threat, historical frames and the involvement of Russia in the dispute was not the only form of domestication. Pointing out that the situation in Eastern Europe requires the Polish government to take specific actions, could have increased the recipients’ interest in the conflict and feeling that it is directly related to them. Thus, connections at the political level can be noted. Tusk’s words in the material are a perfect example of it. The Prime Minister said that “the situation in Ukraine is to be or not to be for Poland” (*Rzeczpospolita*, 03/04/2014). That is why helping Ukraine is necessary. It seems that this might explain in part the frames and contexts used by the Polish media, as well as the main coverage perspective, because according to Nohrstedt the coverage is heavily dependent on the “national foreign policy context” (2009: 108). Wasburn (2002) has said that military, political, as well as historical ties between the covering state and the state involved in the covered conflict influence the media’s interest in the event. Poland has those kinds of ties to both Ukraine and Russia. The quote by Donald Tusk indicates, however, that the relations to Ukraine are stronger, which also might have increased the sense of Ukraine being the “worthy” victim (see Nohrstedt, 2009; Herman and Chomsky, 1988).

Although both the quality newspaper and the tabloid articles contain a reference to the past, they use it differently. It is possible to observe that in the case of *Rzeczpospolita*, emphasis is placed more on political discourse and decisions by the government about Ukraine. This is in line with the dominant topic covered by this medium (see Tab. 3.1). The historical frames used by *Fakt* are also the result of the main issues described. It seems that these can amplify the recipient’s fear by referring to hypothetical scenarios. Making parallels to the period of World War II gave the audience a certain picture of the conflict. The tabloid’s material can be an interesting example of simplifying reality not only by referring to a

well-known aggressor, but also by indicating that history has come full circle. The complexity of the conflict is not presented, which obviously affects how it is perceived. It seems that omitting certain nuancing facts, or presenting them to a lesser extent, than quality media is an element differentiating the media types. This was confirmed during the in-depth interviews. The *Fakt* journalist, when asked about the differences in the coverage of the conflict between his medium and other media in Poland, answered that the essential element is photos and without them the story does not exist. The respondent also pointed out that simplicity was crucial:

“We simplify the reality very much, because we assume that our recipient is not so well educated and also not strongly oriented in the tides of geopolitics, which is sometimes wrong. But we simplify the message so he can know what is going on.” [R1]

Simplifying information by referring to known contexts, like historical issues understood as basic facts, is therefore a coverage mechanism used by tabloids, as well as a form of domestication. It makes it easy to understand the conflict and its parties as good and bad – which is important from the point of view of the main coverage perspective. This process is noticeable to a greater or lesser extent within all of the examined media, which is the result of a consensus among journalists in the way they described the conflict. This confirms, once again, Russ-Mohl’s (2013) observations of the influence of social markers on the actions of journalists and the coverage they present. This is due to the fact that the coverage of international events will always be embedded in a specific national context, for example a historical one (see Riegert, 2011; Gomez Rodriguez, 2007; Thompson, 1995). It is difficult for journalists to escape this context, as demonstrated by this study’s results.

4.1.2 Comparisons to historical events in the coverage

More than one historical issue could be described in each unit. Therefore, the actual number of historical events referenced to in the publications (see Tab. 4.2) is higher than the number of units that contained historical contexts (see Tab. 4.1). Taking into account the amount of historical events referred to in the analyzed media (see Tab. 4.2), it can be seen that they constitute 17 percent of the total research material, which is a relatively high result. It also shows a strong saturation of information with these types of frames.

Among the most often referenced events were World War II (41 %) and the Russo-Georgian war (14 %). It can be seen that the second most referenced category was in fact “other” historical events. This contained various events that were not categorized into their own groups like the rest. The code book also includes

questions about the comparison of the situation in Ukraine to other wars and armed conflicts (see Appendix no. 1). The analysis confirmed that World War II and the Russo-Georgian war were the most common comparisons used by journalists. Therefore, this is an almost identical reflection of the data relating to the dominant historical events visible in the coverage (see Tab. 4.2). The characteristics of the most frequently reported events and comparisons related in particular to the presence and actions of Russia. It should be remembered that this state was actively involved in both wars, often being considered as aggressor or one of the aggressive actors. That is why it is possible to say that Russia could be used by the media as an element of domestication. It could also have a significant impact on the dominant coverage perspective (see Tab. 3.12). This is particularly interesting from the point of view of perceiving Russia as an “enemy”. Not only as an enemy of Ukraine, but also as an enemy of Poland.

Ottosen and Øvrebø's (2016: 70) research on how the gas attack in Syria was framed showed that the enemy image is more noticeable in editorials and commentaries than news stories, because there the journalist's opinion can be expressed more clearly. Most of the information relating to historical events, where Russia was presented as an “enemy”, was in the press and in particular the quality newspapers (see Tab. 4.2). Although editorials were not included in this study, Poland has a strong tradition of commentary journalism in the press (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2012), so it can be expected that historical frames appear more frequently in newspaper articles than in television news.

Referencing historical events like World War II – where Poland was a victim of Russian aggression – can also help in creating and strengthening ties to Poland, which is the essence of domestication (see Gurevitch et al., 1991; Taradai, 2012). On the other hand, it might be a form of deception through a selection of facts that supports an anti-Russian perspective of the dispute. One of the respondents [R11] mentioned this while speaking about the unanimity of the Polish media in the coverage. Consensus in the way the dispute is presented, including the selection of the same frames, can be a limitation of the journalists' work. Especially when they are not fully aware of the fact that they act in accordance with a certain group perspectives, and in the case of some respondents this was noticeable.

Most of the materials on World War II and the Russo-Georgian war appeared in both quality dailies and *Super Express* (Tab. 4.2). It looks the same in the case of comparisons to other wars and the presence of certain historical events in the coverage. An interview for *Super Express* entitled “The West will sell Ukraine like Poland in 1944” (23/07/2014) is a reference to the Yalta conference. The interviewee claims that while the shift of Russian aggression toward Poland is rather impossible, the West will allow Putin to keep the territories already

seized by the separatists. In his opinion, this is to allow peace to be reached at the expense of Ukrainian sovereignty, just as in the case of Poland during the World War II.

A similar tone was presented by *Gazeta Wyborcza* in the article “Gdańsk 1939, Donetsk 2014” (01/09/2014), where the passivity of Europe and the world regarding Ukraine was also referred to. The article also used a comparison of the situation of Poland from the time of the war to the situation of its eastern neighbor at the same time. In this way, it was possible to create a connection between these countries on an emotional level, in the context of being “victims”. Therefore, the possibility of identifying with the people of Ukraine, which is one of the important news factors (see Chyliński and Russ-Mohl, 2008; Galtung and Ruge, 1965) increased. However, how the aggressor is portrayed is quite different. The journalists point out similarities between Putin and Hitler, which is very much emphasized in the text. The Russian president was very often compared to Hitler also in other materials (see Tab. 4.3). The “enemy” is thereby personified by these people, and comparing Putin to Hitler is an obvious way to demonize him. Despite them being active in different historical periods, their actions are perceived in the same way, evoking equally negative emotions. The use of comparisons to World War II and negative historical figures in the case of Russia’s actions was also noticeable in *Fakty TVN*. MEP Kowal, whose statement appears in the material “Russia versus Ukraine – the tension lowers, or is it the silence before the storm”, says that the actions of the Russian authorities resemble the policy of Tsarina Catherine II and Stalin (31/03/2014). These figures, like Hitler, are embodiments of a general concept of the “enemy”, which is identified with Russia – and mainly with political actors. That is why the ability to decode information is in this case crucial. It is important to understand that the comparison of the conflict in Ukraine to World War II or Putin to Hitler and Stalin is only a kind of metaphor. However, it is this metaphor that makes the national recipient able to find commonalities between the described event and other similar situations from the past. On this basis, the reader can determine that basically sharing the same “enemy” is a factor that makes Ukraine not “them”, but more “we.” That is also why the conflict is not just “their” dispute, but also “ours”.

The perception of Russia as an aggressor and a possible enemy is also noticeable in the case of the Russo-Georgian war. However, this antagonistic image is not the result of a direct attack on Poland – like in the case of World War II. It is rather a fear that what happened to Georgia could happen to Poland as well. It is worth noting that this historical-geopolitical context was most often referenced by journalists (see Tab. 3.13). Also, supporting Georgia’s sovereignty

and Poland being involved in resolving the dispute in connection with Russia's aggressive actions, means that Russia could be perceived negatively by Poles. Most materials referencing this conflict appeared in *Rzeczpospolita* and *Super Express* (see Tab. 4.2). The tabloid referred in particular to the visit of President Kaczyński to Georgia in 2008 and to his words regarding the future Russian expansion in the region. For example, this was noticeable in the article "Kaczyński predicted it" (*Super Express*, 03/03/2014), where the journalist writes about the involvement of the then head of the Polish state in solving the dispute. The political support provided to the Georgian authorities by Kaczyński is an interesting reference to be used in the context of the dispute in Ukraine. The former government of the Civic Platform, as well as the opposition, was involved in helping Ukraine – mainly in the form of imposing economic and political sanctions on Russia. The reference to the war in Georgia is in this case both relating to national security as well as a form of condemning the unlawful attack on an independent state.

The illegality of Russia's actions both in the case of Georgia and Ukraine was also presented in the context of the Russian Federation's imperialistic policy. This was reflected in several *Rzeczpospolita* articles, such as "Empire wants to be a civilization" (02/02/2015) and "The last moment to rebuild the empire" (19/03/2014). In addition to Russia's desire to strengthen its political position in the region, the text also talks about the conflict at the civilizational level between Russia and the Western countries. The author writes that the dispute in this respect results from the inability of the West to understand that Russia perceives Ukraine as the "pearl in the crown" of its empire. Therefore, it is difficult for it to accept that Ukraine wants closer ties with the European Union and NATO, both of which Poland belongs to. That is why apart from a political-military conflict, the dispute also takes place at the level of values, which is more symbolic. This view of the war in Ukraine also means that the understanding of the "enemy" takes on a broader meaning. This enemy is not only perceived as a territorial invader, but also as belonging to a different civilization – taking into account the different nature of Russia's political regime and its professed values (see Boyd-Barrett, 2017; Pasitselska, 2017). Some of the journalists indicate this factor. When asked about how to define the conflict, the *Fakt* journalist stated that this is a dispute "between the Western world and Russia" [R1]. The respondent added that being a part of the Western world generally means belonging to international organizations such as NATO and the European Union. Therefore, in his opinion, Ukraine joining these entities was unacceptable for Russia, due to the risk of losing Ukraine from the sphere of its influence. This view was also confirmed by another of the respondents who stated that "this is a conflict over

influence between the European Union and Russia” [R2]. It should be noted that a similar situation with Russia took place when Poland applied for membership in NATO (Celewicz and Nizioł-Celewicz, 2006: 222–223). Therefore, it is assumed that the similar experiences of Poland and Ukraine in this context could strengthen the feeling among the audience that the conflict relates to them. Because of its democratic values, Poland supports Ukraine’s right to self-determination. The *Gazeta Wyborcza* journalist argues that this type of support for the eastern neighbor by political actors and publicists is already a kind of tradition. However, as the respondent notes, supporting Ukraine in its conflict with Russia is also due to purely pragmatic reasons:

“The independence of Ukraine, which is a state striving towards Europe, is such a basic element of Polish politics and also one of the founding myths of independent Poland. The whole policy of Piłsudski aimed at creating a Ukrainian state, which would be a buffer state to Russia, included this aspect. Later on, the emigre politics of Giedroyc and Mieroszewski told the Poles: you must make sure to create an attempt to let Ukraine to be independent, because this is the best defense of Poland. Therefore, we can say that we are currently defending Poland’s independence in this military-political aspect.” [R4]

The journalist’s words show that the interest in the conflict in Ukraine not only resulted from a compassion for this country and condemnation of Russian aggression. It could have also been the result of geopolitical traditions, like ensuring Poland’s national security. It could be seen as a kind of broadening of Herman and Chomsky’s “worthy” victim concept (1988). The Ukrainians are not only perceived as defenseless and defeated, in need of help, but also as having security interests which coincide with those of Poland. This is very important, because it confirms that the political environment, just like the social one, could have affected the media discourse (see Dobek-Ostrowska, 2007; McQuail, 2000), even if the journalists denied that someone else influenced the selection of topics. It is also interesting from the point of view of domestication. Its effectiveness is to a large extent based on creating connections between the event and the recipient, also by reference to political elements (see Gross and Kopper, 2011; Segev, 2015). These are also assumed to affect the functioning of the media system. Therefore, showing that journalists, especially from quality media, used these factors when writing about the conflict, confirms that they were also transmitters of political content. However, it should be noted that this was not always related to political sympathies, but was primarily the result of Russia’s involvement in the dispute, and secondly its impact on the country. Therefore, while making content about the dispute, including comparisons between the Russo-Georgian war and the conflict in Ukraine, journalists sought to draw attention to the fact that Russian aggression is unacceptable, especially from the point of view of international

law. That is why, apart from domesticating the conflict by evoking a general and traditional hostility to Russia resulting from fear, journalists made connections to Poland being a part of the Western world, mainly through being a member of international organizations and through its professed values. Therefore, it can be assumed that the recipients consider information about the role of these organizations in connection to the conflict as important to them. In this way, by referencing the so-called Western system of values and, as mentioned earlier, international organizations which are connected with the Western world and represent it, it is also possible to see similarities to the counter-domestication described by Olausson (2013: 715–720). The event is not only subject to a kind of extroverted domestication (Olausson, 2013: 715–720) seen through the prism of context-oriented factors relating to more regional or neighborly relations, but is also presented through a more global perspective.

Some events related to World War II – which the conflict in Ukraine was most often compared to – were put in the “other” category. These were for example events preceding the outbreak of the war, such as the Anschluss of Austria (see Pictures 4.1 and 4.2) and the Munich conference. They were often referred to and basically dominated the “other” category.



Picture 4.1: “Anschluss of Crimean Peninsula by Russia is a fact since yesterday”.

Source: Gazeta Wyborcza, 07/03/2014



Picture 4.2: “Putin took Crimea like Hitler Czechoslovakia”.

Source: Super Express, 04/03/2014

Comparisons of the annexation of Crimea to Hitler's occupation of Czechoslovakia appeared in both quality newspapers and tabloids. These articles are good examples of how the journalists manifested the dispositional enemy image of Russia, or the concept of the enemy in general, both through personification and through visual frames (see Ottosen, 1995; Epkins, 2016). Interestingly, two March articles by *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Super Express* even had almost same title – "Anschluss of Crimea" – which shows that the journalists often used identical frames. This was also noticeable in the terminology applied. In the articles "Anschluss of Crimea. The annexation of the Ukrainian Peninsula by Russia is a fact since yesterday" (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, 07/03/2014) and "Putin took Crimea like Hitler Czechoslovakia" (*Super Express*, 04/03/2014) Vladimir Putin was compared to Adolf Hitler. While in the case of *Gazeta Wyborcza* this comparison came from quoting Hillary Clinton, in the *Super Express* material it was the journalist who used this wording. Both texts also spoke about the necessity of imposing sanctions on Russia and the West taking more decisive action to prevent further expansion of the Russian Federation. Then it could be possible to avoid a situation like the one that took place after the Munich conference. The similar mechanisms used by journalists of both newspapers show that the analyzed media, despite the differences in the kind of presented content, sometimes behaved in the same way – especially when they wrote about Russia or similar events, like the annexation of Crimea. The use of the same frames shows that the media outlets were well aware of how to bring the event closer to the public (see Thompson, 1995). This is obviously because they are also a part of Polish society and know the fears and aversions prevailing in it (Tab. 3.13). That is why Putin was compared to Hitler – because the Nazi leader is well known to the Poles, mainly due to Poland's participation in World War II and Germany's assault on the country. Therefore, referencing the actions of this despised actor in the context of the conflict in Ukraine could have influenced the reader's imaginations. It can be assumed that both the aforementioned figures and the events to which the conflict in Ukraine was compared to have a specific meaning to the Polish recipient.

Tab. 4.2: *Historical events shown in the material (in percent).*

	<i>Fakt</i>	<i>Super Express</i>	<i>Gazeta Wyborcza</i>	<i>Rzeczpospolita</i>	Wiadomości TVP1	Fakty TVN	Total
World War I	7	2	2	1	17	0	4
World War II	47	40	37	35	20	62	41
Cold War ^a	0	12	7	8	13	7	8
Communism ^b	3	2	8	4	3	0	4
Transnistria War	3	2	10	4	0	0	5
Russo-Georgian war	17	21	10	21	0	0	14
Other	23	21	26	27	47	31	24
N=	30	52	88	78	30	13	291

^a 1947–1991

^b 1944–1989 – it was decided to differentiate the “Cold War” from “Communism” due to the nomenclature used by journalists and time. The period of the Communist Party’s ruling in Poland was considered to be the “Communism” category. Relations between the satellite states of the USSR were also referred to this concept.

Source: Author

The historical frames also served as a reminder of Poland’s relations with the parties to the conflict. However, these frames were found in only four percent of the analyzed materials, which constitutes 70 research units (see Tab. 4.3). The historical references did not apply exclusively to the relation of Poland with Russia or Ukraine – the journalists focused more on regional and global conflicts when using historical frames (see Tab. 4.2).

Tab. 4.3: *Historical relations between Poland and parties to the conflict (in percent).*

	<i>Fakt</i>	<i>Super Express</i>	<i>Gazeta Wyborcza</i>	<i>Rzeczpospolita</i>	Wiadomości TVP1	Fakty TVN	Total
Yes	6	8	3	5	1	3	4
No	94	92	97	95	99	97	96
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N=	170	206	438	385	294	233	1726

Source: Author

The most references to the relations between Poland and parties to the conflict were presented by *Rzeczpospolita*, *Fakt* and *Super Express*. It should be remembered, that tabloids were also the medium that most often wrote

about the consequences of the conflict for Poland (see Tab. 3.1). In turn, *Rzeczpospolita* indicated that a Russian invasion was the cause of the conflict in Ukraine (see Tab. 3.5), and the dispute itself is not internal but inter-state (see Tab. 3.6). Therefore, it could be an important way of strengthening the conviction that this country is once again a threat not only to another country, but also to Poland. The general negativity toward the Russian Federation, partly through the prism of past events, in fact deepened the conviction that Russia should be perceived more like “enemy” than a “friend” of Poland. This was expressed in the analyzed materials. The *Fakt* article entitled “The Russians are still lying that they liberate” summarizes what the USSR did in relation to Poland during World War II (17/09/2014). The historian that is interviewed in this article refers to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the aggression against Poland from September 17, the Katyn massacre and the so-called liberation of Warsaw. All of these events are in his opinion proof that the USSR and now Russia have no qualms about assaulting its neighbors. This is also a fairly clear reference to the present conflict between Russia and Ukraine. This strong criticism of Russia, especially on the 75th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II, is quite symbolic since it refers to events that are strongly rooted in the Polish national consciousness. It also shows that in the opinion of the journalist and also his interviewee, Russia and its actions, both in relation to Poland and Ukraine, are marked by aggression. Therefore, the frame of the “enemy” and “aggressor”, which journalists mostly attributed to Russia, is an element that could be further strengthened by reference to historical events. This has been confirmed by the in-depth interviews. Some of the journalists with whom I spoke were asked about the extent to which history influenced how the conflict was covered by the media. The *Super Express* journalist said it was a key issue. At the same time, the respondent pointed out that the situation in Ukraine had been covered in the context of possible aggression against Poland and similar situations from the past, like World War II:

“These issues of Polish-Soviet, Polish-Russian conflicts were somewhere in the back of the head. Besides, there were also materials that, in an emphasized historical context, depicted what was happening in Ukraine, and these analogies imposed themselves. Indeed, the past defined what was then created.” [R3]

This quote among others shows that the journalists, whether they intended to or not, put a kind of ethnocentric filter on the news in order to bring it even closer to the audience (see Wolsfeld, 2004; Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Mansell and Cammaerts, 2010). Although using this kind of ethnocentric perspective can attract interest, according to Nossek (2004) and Gans (1979), it can also limit

the content's objectivity. It could be said that an ethnocentric filter by definition constitutes a form of bias, since it limits the perspective to a particular national background. The past, especially that which regards conflicts, determined to a large extent the way the dispute and the actors involved in it were covered. It is also, and perhaps above all, a part of the ethnocentric filter imposed by journalists, which allowed recipients to identify actors as belonging to either "us" or "them". This is especially common in war journalism (Galtung, 2006). That is why the results of the project "Ukraine 2014 – media war and the war in media" showed differences in how the events were framed – also with regards to historical matters (Nygren and Hök, 2016). The Polish media presented the conflict through the prism of Russian aggression experienced in the past (see Głowacki and Smolak, 2016) – which is also confirmed in my study. Meanwhile, the Russian media filtered messages through the prism of the so-called Russian World and Ukraine being overtaken by a "Kiev Junta" (Kiria and Shpyntova, 2016).

A form of ethnocentric filter dedicated to the historical relations between Poland and the parties to the conflict was mostly visible in the case of tabloids. Quite often, an element of fear was operating, referring to events in which Poland was the victim of mainly German or Russian belligerence. It was the fear of Russia's actions in the context of the possibility of the outbreak of another World War that was also an element of domestication, which the media, especially *Fakt* and *Super Express*, used quite scrupulously.

In a poll conducted by *Fakt* ("Poles are afraid of war" 04/03/2014) the public was asked if they think that the conflict will cross over to Poland. Most of them answered that they are terrified of this prospect and, interestingly enough, some of them referred to World War II, which can be confirmation that this event generates certain negative emotions in the recipients – mainly fear. One of the persons polled stated that in the conflict in Ukraine, "Russia acts like the Third Reich [when it attacked Poland]" (*Fakt*, 04/03/2014). One can see that referencing past disputes in which Poland took part generates strong emotions in Poles and is thereby an effective mechanism of domestication. This has also been noticed in the case of the content presented by the quality newspapers.

A symbolic reference to World War II and the actions of the USSR was noticeable in one *Rzeczpospolita* article. The article entitled "Green men before September 17" (*Rzeczpospolita*, 17/09/2014) refers, just like the *Fakt* article, precisely to the assault on Poland in 1939. Despite the reference to the 75th anniversary of this event, the journalist also wrote about the similarity of the NKVD activities to the actions of the so-called "little green men" in Crimea. This specific analogy, especially concerning the definition of the "victim" (Poland and Ukraine), as well as the "enemy" (Russia) is undoubtedly a factor that could

affect how the material and the dispute is decoded by the recipients. The journalist clearly presents certain contexts and how the information should be read, triggering national stereotypes and fears – specifically, fears about Russia. Using these types of mechanisms has also been done by describing the so-called Massacre in Warsaw (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, “Putin’s Crime” – 25/03/2014), the Polish-Bolshevik war (*Fakt*, “Russians can drop atomic bomb on Warsaw” – 02/03/2015) and the expulsion of Poles from the Kremlin (*Rzeczpospolita*, “Moscow holiday with a Polish accent” – 04/11/2014). Referring to events older than several dozen years requires recipients to have some specific knowledge. However, it seems that journalists assume that the audience has such knowledge, and if not, that certain schemes are passed naturally within given social groups, such as families. The *Gazeta Wyborcza* journalist believes that this is the case for Poles. In his opinion, Poles understand well what is happening in the East, because “in different families, similar stories exist in the category of several decades in the past” [R4]. Therefore, the memories passed down from generation to generation can strengthen the feeling of closeness with the described event (Goffman, 1974).

Historical relations between Poland and Ukraine have also been referred to in the media. For example, references were made to the Volhynia Massacre. This was mainly brought up by *Rzeczpospolita*. However, references to this event usually did not have a negative overtone, but rather referred to the need to undertake dialogue with Ukraine (*Rzeczpospolita*, “We are extremely grateful to Poles for support” 07/03/2014). Poland supported the country in its fight against Russia. Therefore, domesticating the coverage by referencing negative historical relations with Ukraine was not as common as it was in the case of Russia. However, while the anti-Ukrainian discourse was not noticeable in the mainstream media, as one of the journalists [R11] points out, the situation looked completely different on the internet. According to the journalist, Russians put anti-Ukrainian propaganda online which for instance put the Volhynia Massacre back on the agenda, even though “until 2013 it was absent in the Polish public debate” [R11].

The differences raised by the respondent [R11] between online and traditional media discourse are quite interesting. It seems like the mainstream media only used references that were anti-Russian. According to Garlicki (2015) and the Centre for Public Opinion Research (2017), the internet is perceived by Poles, next to television, as their most important source of information. The differences in the perception of the parties to the conflict mentioned by the journalist [R11] show that it is necessary to investigate this issue in the future and compare the discourses presented by these two kinds of media. However, Poles still consider television as their main source of information (see Garlicki, 2015;

Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, 2017), and therefore it can be assumed that the anti-Russian views presented by this medium – as shown in my study (see Tab. 3.12) – had a stronger impact on Poles. Although Garlicki (2015) points out that newspapers are not such an important source of information for the Polish people, they still have a strong impact on the agenda of other media (Instytut Monitoringu Mediów, 2014 and 2015). Since the press framed Russia as the enemy (see Ottosen, 1995; Ottosen and Øvrebø, 2016: 70), this perspective might have transferred to other media and in turn to their audience, thereby further reinforcing the negative attitudes toward Russia.

The historical coverage was not only connected with events that happened many dozens or even hundreds of years ago, but also with those that occurred in the last ten years – for example the Smolensk catastrophe and the so-called Partition of Ukraine between Poland and Russia. Both issues appeared in the media coverage, used as domestication. Referring to these events, by comparing certain situations to them, was not the only form of domestication. Journalists used this mechanism also when writing about the impact of these issues on political actors.

One of the issues that was quite strongly covered by the Polish media – both by tabloid and quality outlets – was the interview with the then Minister of Foreign Affairs and later Marshal of the Sejm, Radosław Sikorski, for the American portal Politico (Judah, 2014). Sikorski said that during his visit to Moscow in 2008 with Prime Minister Tusk, Putin proposed the partition of Ukraine (see Pictures 4.3 and 4.4). According to the articles “Radosław Sikorski reveals: Putin proposed to Tusk the partition of Ukraine” (*Fakt*, 21/10/2014) and “Putin wanted the partition of Ukraine” (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, 21/10/2014) similar proposals were also made later by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, who wanted Poland to take western Ukraine and Russia the eastern part. This is interesting, because the western areas of Ukraine, including Lviv, in the time of the outbreak of World War II belonged to Poland. Referring to issues like these in the media probably has a significant impact, at least in increasing the interest of the audience even if the information is not entirely true. However, this way of putting the story in a Polish context – both by writing about domestic politicians and bringing up the fact that a part of Ukraine once belonged to Poland – could certainly have constituted an effective instrument of domestication (see Rieght, 2011; Thompson, 1995; Clausen, 2004). Moreover, the very use of the word “partition” could have affected how the information was read, and thereby putting the story in a historical framework (see Entman, 1993; Entman, 2004). It is a fairly clear reference to the partitions of Poland (1772–1795). Therefore it is possible to talk about an attempt to bring back this old phenomenon, but

in another context, because in the 18th century Poland was the victim and Russia was the aggressor. In this new partition being proposed, both countries would perform the same function. It should be noted that according to Sikorski, neither he nor Tusk responded to Putin's proposal. However, the frames used by the media, for example by adding maps showing a possible division of Ukraine to the articles, and using historically charged terms in titles, could strengthen the level of domestication. In addition, the very fact that the words referred to in the materials were spoken by a member of the Polish government affects the relevance of the issue for Poles. Interestingly, while Sikorsky's statements were referred to in materials from October, 2014, information based on the Zhirinovskiy proposal was already published in March. In the *Super Express* article entitled "Poles do not want Lviv" (26/03/2014), comments by Polish citizens on the possible joining of Lviv to Poland were presented. Everyone unanimously denied the possibility of such a thing. Moreover, it was pointed out that if Poland agreed to this type of cooperation, it would then itself fall victim to Russia. Therefore, it seems that the context of a "partition", although used in relation to a possible partition of Ukraine by Russia together with Poland, was in fact a kind of reminder of Russia's aggressive intentions. Moreover, it strengthened the negative image of this state as a party to the dispute.



Picture 4.3: "Radosław Sikorski reveals: Putin proposed to Tusk the partition of Ukraine".
Source: Fakt, 21/10/2014



Picture 4.4: "Putin wanted the partition of Ukraine".
Source: Gazeta Wyborcza, 21/10/2014

In the materials concerning Putin's proposal to divide Ukraine, the interview given by Sikorski was also treated in a rather negative way. Journalists pointed to the fact that Sikorski, despite having been the Minister of Foreign Affairs for many years, does not really know what diplomacy is all about. The article "Sikorski went mad. Marshal Radosław Sikorski is an object of ridicule. Diplo-idiot" (*Super Express*, 23/10/2014) refers to the biggest mishaps of the politician during his career and also quite sarcastically refers to his statement in an interview that the alleged proposal to Tusk never actually happened, or that he could not remember it. On one *Fakt* cover – "How was it with Putin? Embarrassment! Sikorski to resign!" (22/10/2014) – a reference was again made to this incident and at the same time it was stated that the politician should resign from office. That kind of materials was presented mainly by tabloids, which may be due to their rather sensational character. But it is worth remembering that both *Fakt* and *Super Express* are the most widely read dailies in Poland and the views they present reach a big audience. Therefore, the level of domestication in these media may be stronger compared to rest of the analyzed outlets. In addition, the implication that the situation in Ukraine has a real impact on the political situation in the country, for example with the possible resignation of Sikorski, makes the recipient recognize that it is also "our" dispute. Sikorski did resign from his position in June 2015 and decided to withdraw from political life. The media coverage of this issue in 2014 could have influenced his decision to some extent, especially since the media gave a lot of attention to the opposition and its tough critique. It is a difficult thing to prove, but might at least indicate something about the interaction between the media and the political system, which is crucial from the point of view of domestication.

The media also made comparisons between the MH17 plane crash and the Smolensk catastrophe (see Pictures 4.5 and 4.6). Although they took place four years apart and in different areas, Russia is a common element for both of them. That is why such comparisons appeared in the media. Mainly they took the form of quotations rather than the journalists' own words. However, the appearance of this type of content in the media could make the audience relate to the events and the presented information.



Picture 4.5: "Putin declared war on us on April 10".

Source: *Super Express*, 10/04/2014



Picture 4.6: "Donbass is not Smolensk".

Source: *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 24/07/2014

Materials concerning these two disasters appeared most often in the pages of *Super Express* and *Gazeta Wyborcza*. In the case of the tabloid, for example, the words of the then spokesperson for Law and Justice, Hoffman, was presented, who stated that the death of Lech Kaczyński was the result of a coup that Putin ordered (*Super Express*, "Putin declared war on us on April 10", 10/04/2014) (see Picture 4.6). The reason for that was the involvement of the former Polish president in resolving the Georgian crisis. Of course, this article was written before the MH17 catastrophe had happened. However, the rhetoric in it does refer to the information presented in the *Gazeta Wyborcza* article ("Donbass is not Smolensk", 24/07/2014). The article discusses the Law and Justice party's call for the creation of an international commission to investigate the catastrophes in Smolensk and Donbass. The journalist quotes Macierewicz's statement that "if Lech Kaczyński were not killed, the shooting down of the Boeing would not have happened" (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, 24/07/2014). Therefore, strong links between the opinions of Hoffman and Macierewicz are noticeable. However, the perspective of the *Gazeta Wyborcza* material is very critical to the opinion of Law and Justice. In the interview, which was conducted with the head of the State Commission for the Investigation of Accidents, it was found that the only similarity between the two events is the death of innocent people. Other than that, the events had nothing to do with each other. The comparison of both events also appeared in

another *Gazeta Wyborcza* material entitled “What links Boeing and Smolensk” (04/08/2014). The journalist is quite ironical about how both the separatists and Law and Justice tried to explain the MH17 and Smolensk catastrophes. The author claims that the events are similar to each other in only this one respect. So both the Russian propaganda machine and the Polish right wing party came up with explanations that the journalist believed to be lies. Although the comparison between the Smolensk and MH17 catastrophes was made to show that the events were completely different from each other – except in one case by *Super Express* – it is still possible to see it as a kind of domestication. Bringing up issues like these, even if only for the sake of proving them wrong, may influence the thinking of the recipients. This is especially the case when the common element – the main villain – in both events is Russia, which is itself a form of domestication. Furthermore, putting the spotlight on discussions among Polish politicians – mainly the Law and Justice party – on this subject could also make the MH17 catastrophe as well as the whole conflict perceived by the audience as more of a national event. Mostly, because an ethnocentric, national filter is put on the information which in the case of news domestication seems to be crucial.

4.1.3 Vladimir Putin compared to historical figures

The analysis of the main coverage perspective (see Tab. 3.12) and how the dominant and secondary actors were presented (see Tab. 3.10 and 3.11) showed that Russia was quite often personalized by its president. It was Vladimir Putin and not the entire nation that was usually presented as a part of the conflict. Therefore, it is assumed that this politician was perceived by the media and the audience as the “enemy”. The analysis of the previously presented articles showed that Putin’s comparison to certain historical figures was often metaphorical. Journalists referred to specific attributes – usually negative – that the persons shared. It is assumed that in this way they wanted to show the recipient how the actions of the Russian politician should be evaluated.

The Russian president was compared to eleven historical figures, most of whom were his predecessors (see Tab. 4.4). Only in two cases, actors from outside of Russia were referred to. These were Hitler and Napoleon. It is worth noting that the Chancellor of the Third Reich was in fact the one who Putin was most often compared to. This is not surprising considering the fact that the most often presented historical event by the media was World War II. Therefore, the comparisons to Hitler, and Stalin who ranked second place, are quite expected. Most of the listed historical figures are known to the Polish audience, both through their connection with their country’s history, as well as by reference to

the history of Europe. Therefore, the possibility of domestication by referring to these people is high, especially through having Putin personify evil (see Epkins, 2016) with reference to certain historical figures (see Tab. 4.4).

Tab. 4.4: *Comparison of Vladimir Putin to the historical figure (in numbers).*

	<i>Fakt</i>	<i>Super Express</i>	<i>Gazeta Wyborcza</i>	<i>Rzeczpospolita</i>	Fakty TVN	Total
Hitler	4	3	6	3	3	19
Stalin	2	6	5	3	1	17
Lenin	1	0	0	0	0	1
Ivan the Terrible	0	2	0	1	0	3
Nicholas I	0	0	1	0	0	1
Alexander II	0	0	1	0	0	1
Nicholas II	0	1	0	0	0	1
Napoleon	0	0	0	1	0	1
Brezhnev	0	1	0	0	0	1
Khrushchev	0	1	0	0	0	1
Tsarina Catharine	0	0	0	0	1	1
N=	7	14	13	8	5	47

Source: Author

The list of historical figures to which Vladimir Putin was compared to was created on the basis of references that appeared in the coverage. The Russian President being compared to historical figures was most common in the newspapers – especially in *Super Express* and *Gazeta Wyborcza*, which confirms the importance of the press in the demonization of the enemy (Ottosen and Øvrebø's, 2016). The comparative articles presented by these two newspapers accounted for 57 percent of all collected materials addressing this issue. In the case of television materials, only in Fakty TVN a few comparisons of Putin appeared to for example Hitler, Stalin and Tsarina Catherine. However, these were mainly references to someone's statements, as in the material presenting the opinion of Kowal about the conflict (Fakty TVN, "Russia versus Ukraine – the tension lowers, or is it the silence before the storm", 31/03/2014). Interestingly, in this material 60 percent of all indications noticeable in this medium's coverage appeared. On the other hand, Wiadomości TVP1 did not do this type of comparison at all. Therefore, it is possible to notice that the use of the analyzed mechanism was not as important for TV journalists as for press journalists.

The reference to Hitler's deeds was the most noticeable comparison (see Tab. 4.4). References on this subject appeared in *Rzeczpospolita* and *Super Express*. Interestingly, the titles of a couple of articles from March, 2014 sounded almost the same (see Pictures 4.7 and 4.8). In a tabloid article entitled "Putin speaks like Hitler" (*Super Express*, 03/03/2014) the journalist makes comparisons between Putin's and Hitler's speeches. These were particularly speeches regarding intervention in the Crimea as well as invading Poland. In the case of the first event it was said that "Russia reserves the right to (...) defend the Russian-speaking population living in Ukraine" (*Super Express*, 03/03/2014). When referring to Hitler's words, the so-called Gliwice incident was pointed out – "The Third Reich cannot remain passive and will respond with fire to the brutal attack by the Polish army" (*Super Express*, 03/03/2014).

In the *Rzeczpospolita* article, statements regarding the connection of Crimea to Russia and the Sudetes to Germany were compared ("Putin spoke like Hitler", 20/03/2014). Under the pictures of Hitler and Putin, which present them in almost the same manner, fragments are shown of their statements after the occupations of the mentioned areas. Putin was quoted as saying that "Crimea has always been and is an inseparable part of Russia" (*Rzeczpospolita*, 20/03/2014) while Hitler said that "the Sudetes were and are German" (*Rzeczpospolita*, 20/03/2014). At the same time, the material compares the collapse of the USSR with the Versailles Treaty, stating that these events were difficult to accept for both leaders. The reference to the breakup of the Soviet Union, including Ukraine's split from Russia, in the opinion of the journalist and Putin, was one of the reasons for the Crimea annexation. According to the author, Hitler was acting similarly by annexing the Sudetenland. The journalist also saw a similarity between the two actors in their rather negative attitude toward the West and its demands. The historical references in the *Rzeczpospolita* and *Super Express* materials are quite similar to each other, which confirms that the journalists while writing about Ukraine used the same mechanisms and contexts. In the *Super Express* article, Hitler's assault on Poland was referred to, which means that the degree of closeness between the recipient and the material could have been great. However, in the case of the *Rzeczpospolita* text, the Polish reader would also be able to understand the presented analogies without any problem. Therefore, it seems that the level of domestication of these issues, through a metaphorical reference to historical figures and events, could be high in the case of the analyzed units. The journalists clearly referred to the statements of Putin and Hitler, pointing to obvious analogies between them.



Picture 4.7: "Putin spoke like Hitler".

Source: *Rzeczpospolita*, 20/03/2014

Picture 4.8: "Putin speaks like Hitler".

Source: *Super Express*, 03/03/2014

The president of the Russian Federation was also often compared to Stalin. Seventeen out of 47 references concerned this actor (see Tab. 4.4). Most of the materials comparing Stalin's and Putin's actions concerned the Soviet attack on Poland in September 1939 and the similarities between that and the current situation in the Crimea. To a large extent, the use of references to World War II served to indicate that Russia still has imperialist ambitions today. It was also mentioned in *Rzeczpospolita*'s article "To match Stalin's fame" (17/03/2015). The Ukrainian writer Kurkow says that Putin is aggressive towards Ukraine because of complexes that he has to Stalin. Therefore, his actions toward former member states of the USSR and so-called satellite states are based on a desire to regain the power Russia had in that time. This was also mentioned in the *Fakt* article entitled "Estonians are afraid of Russia" (03/09/2014) as well as materials from *Gazeta Wyborcza* such as "Ukraine is not Finland" (10/03/2014) and "De-escalation, do not tease the bear" (04/06/2014). At the same time, in the latter article there is also criticism of Western politicians, especially then French president Hollande. Similar to his predecessor Sarkozy in Georgia, he was to take part in negotiations with Russia on the resolution of the Ukraine conflict. Interestingly, besides referring to the mentioned events, the article also brings up the fact that the West, including France, acts as British Prime Minister Chamberlain, who after the conference in Munich uttered the memorable phrase: "I believe it is peace for our time" (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, "De-escalation, do not tease the bear", 04/06/2014). Although in the last material, references to both Stalin and Hitler appear, the previously mentioned articles refer only to the former leader of the Soviet Union. They clearly indicate that Putin should be perceived similarly as he. Taking into account that World War II was among the most common

comparisons of the situation in Ukraine, especially the USSR's attack on Poland, it can be assumed that references to Stalin could also be used to indicate the "enemy". The same thing goes for Hitler. Additionally, when using this historical figure while writing about the situation in Ukraine, journalists might have aimed at amplifying fear in the audience (see Tab. 3.13). It could have made the reader more attached to the described issues and increased interest in it.

In addition to references to Hitler and Stalin – characters uniquely perceived by Poles – the articles also include references to Russian tsars such as Ivan the Terrible (*Rzeczpospolita* "Putin on the throne of Ivan the Terrible", 14–15/08/2014), Nicholas I (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, "The second Crimean war," 05/06/2014), Nicholas II (*Super Express*, "We will sweep Poland from the earth", 12/08/2014), Alexander II (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, "Putin crimes", 19/07/2014) and Tsarina Catherine (Fakty, "Russia versus Ukraine – the tension lowers, or is it the silence before the storm", 31/03/2014) (see Tab. 4.4). In most cases, these materials were about Putin's ambition to regain Russia's lost power. However, issues directly related to Poland's history were also brought up. For example *Gazeta Wyborcza* wrote about the situation in 1861 when, during the reign of tsar Alexander II, the Russian army crushed patriotic demonstrations in the Kingdom of Poland ("Putin's crimes", 19/07/2014). This material makes a reference to a letter sent to the tsar, in which he was called a "common murderer". In this way, the author makes a comparison between Alexander II's actions to those of Putin – which in his opinion, by arming the separatists, contributed to the MH17 catastrophe. According to the journalist, the words used to describe the tsar perfectly fit to Russia's current leader as well. Referencing this event from more than a hundred years ago – from the times when Poland was under Russian rule – can create an emotional connection between the described event and the recipient. For the Polish reader, the behavior of Alexander II can be seen as criminal. Therefore, the comparison between the Warsaw massacre and the MH17 catastrophe, and the terms used to describe both the tsar and Putin, could have made the audience adopt the perspective presented by the media.

4.2 Consequences of the conflict for Poland

Historical and cultural ties seem to produce the strongest bond between the audience and the information it consumes. They facilitate the consumers' understanding and interpretation of the content (see Gurevitch et al., 1991; Taradai, 2012). On the other hand, connections at the geographical, political and economic level – especially if the described event has a concrete impact on the citizens of a country – also make it possible to talk about domestication of

information (see Atad, 2017: 763; Lee et al., 2017). The geographical proximity of Ukraine, and Poland's relations with the parties to the conflict, may affect the general public's interest in the conflict. However, if the media create additional bonds it may further strengthen this interest and make it be perceived by the audience as "our" event. The involvement of Polish authorities in solving the dispute, and Russia imposing economic sanctions on Poland, raises the question – is a domestication of the conflict by Polish media necessary at all? The answer is ambiguous. It should be noted, however, that elements that can be considered a form of domestication appeared in the coverage, especially when the information concerned the consequences of the conflict for Poland. Therefore, paying attention to these elements seems interesting from the point of view of how the journalists presented the dispute – especially since they did so in an engaged way by showing strong support for Ukraine (see Tab. 3.12).

Tab. 4.5: *Consequences of the conflict for Poland (in percent).*

	<i>Fakt</i>	<i>Super Express</i>	<i>Gazeta Wyborcza</i>	<i>Rzeczpospolita</i>	Wiomości TVP1	Fakty TVN	Total
Yes	55	42	20	31	37	35	22
No	45	58	80	69	63	65	78
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N=	170	206	438	385	294	233	1726

Source: Author

The content analysis showed that the topic of consequences for Poland is the second most frequent topic in the analyzed media (see Tab. 3.1). This shows that the national factor was an important element of the coverage. This was confirmed by one of the respondents. The *Fakt* journalist was asked if he thinks that the Polish readers are interested in armed conflicts, and he replied that it depends on if they have an influence on the country:

"It seems to me that the majority of Poles do not care about these armed conflicts around the world, until they concern them directly. For this reason, everything that happens at our Eastern border will interest them." [R1]

Regionalism of information, understood as an interest in a given event due to its geographical or political proximity, is according to the journalist an element that affects what the recipients choose to consume (Lee et al., 2017). This was also confirmed by one of the respondents [R7], who said that "neighboring relations with a country in which something like this [war] happens,

makes Poles interested in it.” At the same time, the respondent recognized that “Ukraine was interesting from the point of view of what it would mean to us” [R7]. Therefore, despite the fact that Poland’s historical and cultural ties with the country may be an important form of domestication (see Tab. 4.1), it was not the most significant element of this mechanism. The journalists who covered the events in Ukraine tried to bring the dispute closer to the Polish audience mainly through the prism of how the event would come to affect Poland (see Tab. 4.5). Even though the event itself and its unique hybrid character could have been an interesting factor of the coverage due to its event-oriented character, it was mainly domesticated through context-oriented factors (see Zerback and Holzleitner, 2018: 367). That is why over 388 research units, which constitute 22 percent of the total material, had references to this topic (see Tab. 4.5 and 4.6). In the cases when this subject was mentioned in the material, but was not the dominant issue, the code book still made it possible to indicate that it appeared in the publication, as an additional question was created for this purpose (see Appendix no. 1). On this basis, it was possible to determine which of the eight categories of consequences appeared most often in the materials.

Tab. 4.6: *Specific consequences of the conflict for Poland (in percent).*

	<i>Fakt</i>	<i>Super Express</i>	<i>Gazeta Wyborcza</i>	<i>Rzeczpospolita</i>	Wiadomości TVP1	Fakty TVN	Total
Military threat (in general)	19	34	30	37	24	38	30
Military threatens from Russia	27	20	29	17	26	16	21
Economic consequences (in general)	5	7	7	7	4	4	6
Economic sanctions from Russia	8	5	13	5	16	13	10
Deterioration of relations with Russia	4	13	3	11	12	7	9
Immigration	0	1	1	5	1	4	2
Threat to Polish citizens in Ukraine	9	2	1	2	10	6	6
Other	28	18	16	16	7	12	16
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N =	93	87	87	121	110	82	388

Source: Author

Among the varieties of consequences for Poland – military, economic, political and social factors were distinguished. It was considered that in the case of the first two groups of consequences, it is necessary to divide them into general factors and those referring directly to Russia's actions. That made it possible to determine if the media were specifying the “threat” and the “enemy”, which was noticeable in the case of historical issues. At the same time, it should be noted that the selection of consequences was based on a preliminary analysis of the media coverage and the fact of Polish authorities showing support for Ukraine. According to Qadir and Alasuutari (2013), the media's emphasis on how an international event affects the covering state economically and politically, and especially its citizens, increases the likelihood of domestication. Therefore, it was decided to check to what extent this factor was presented in the media coverage, and if it could have had a stronger impact on recipients than references to historical contexts. On the other hand, maybe both of these mechanisms were intertwined, making the national perspective in the coverage even stronger.

The coverage's most frequently presented consequences for Poland related to military factors, but for most of the media these indications were quite general (see Tab. 4.6). *Fakt* and Wiadomości TVP1, more than the other media outlets, specified that the military threat came from Russia. In the case of the tabloid, this may be related to the fact that it most often wrote about the consequences of the dispute for Poland, especially through the military prism (see Picture 3.3). Therefore, it is assumed that for the *Fakt* journalists – partly due to the emotional and sensational character of the information – the military threat from Russia was an important element of the coverage. In contrast, more than any of the other media Wiadomości TVP1 had the fear of Russian expansion as the dominant historical and geopolitical context evident in the materials (see Tab. 3.13). That is why it is understandable that the television program pointed to Russia as the concrete threat.

The economic consequences were next to military factors the most frequently described issues affecting Poland (see Tab. 4.6). Just as in the case of the military factors, it was decided to divide the category into two smaller ones. It is worth noting that in the case of economic factors, the media wrote most often about economic sanctions from Russia. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Wiadomości TVP1 and Fakty TVN devoted a lot of attention to these factors. *Gazeta Wyborcza* just after *Rzeczpospolita* was the medium which most often wrote about international political discussion and sanctions (see Tab. 3.1). It is assumed that this could have influenced that this newspaper wrote about economic consequences more often than the other analyzed media. It is interesting to note that *Rzeczpospolita*, despite its rather political-economic profile,

wrote the most rarely next to *Super Express* about the economic consequences of the dispute for Poland. However, this medium mostly took the view that the cause of the conflict was a Russian invasion (see Tab. 3.5) and that the dispute is of an interstate nature (see Tab. 3.6). So that is why it is not surprising that *Rzeczpospolita* might have been more interested in the military and political consequences of the event (see Tab. 4.6).

Except for military and economic consequences, the list also includes such categories as deterioration of relations with Russia, immigration of Ukrainians to Poland, threats to Polish citizens living in Ukraine, and more. In the “other” category, issues such as deterioration of contact at the artistic level were taken into account, which appeared in one of the Wiadomości TVP1 materials entitled “National Culture” (24/07/2014). Due to the fact that military and economic issues were the most commonly presented consequences – which verifies the second research hypothesis – it was decided that these would be analyzed in detail – especially in how they were used by the journalists as a mechanism of domestication.

4.2.1 Military threat

Among the most frequently mentioned consequences of the dispute for Poland, the military threat (in general) came first. This issue appeared in over one hundred analyzed materials. As the journalist of *Gazeta Wyborcza* explains, this comes from the fact that the conflict in Ukraine could actually affect Poland’s security:

“We have to show it, because since 1945 this is the war that has come closest to the Polish borders. Never in the Post-Cold War world has any conflict been so close to Poland’s borders.” [R5]

The proximity of the conflict, and thus the possibility of it crossing over to Polish territory (see Tab. 4.6) could have made Poles and the national media show interest in what was going on in the east. The Fakty TVN journalist also remarked on this factor. Importantly, this medium and *Rzeczpospolita* most often of all analyzed media outlets published information about the military threat (in general) as the most important consequence of the dispute for Poland. The respondent stated that it is difficult to not to be interested in the conflict “when it takes place literally a few hundred kilometers behind the Polish border” [R8]. That is why the transition of the conflict beyond Ukraine and a military threat for Poland (see Tab. 4.6) was one of the most often presented scenarios of the dispute. At the same time, these issues might have made the audience believe that the conflict affected them directly, which is confirmed by the statement of one of the respondents:

“This interest was not the result of what is happening there, but it seems to me that people were wondering if it would somehow transfer to Poland. If it will be calm in Poland and whether we should be afraid of something or not.” [R8]

The fear of a military threat, which the respondent mentioned, was presented especially in materials referring to the need to prepare army and society for the possibility of fighting breaking out. In a *Fakt* material entitled, “Are you not 60 yet? You can go to the army at any time. Mobilization! When and who will be taken to the army” (12/03/2014), the journalist writes about Poland calling in reservists (see Picture 4.9). Although the Minister of Defense, as well as military subordinates, denies that mobilization is in the plans, there is information in the material about who can be called to the army in times of conflict, what he is then required to do, and in which way he will be learn about general mobilization. A similar tone is also presented in the *Super Express* article “Mother, will they take your son to the army?” (05/03/2014). In the material, similar as in *Fakt*, there is a photo of a uniformed soldier, which is surely put there to strengthen the message and illustrate the young men who would be called to the army. This kind of visual framing is a confirmation of what Zelizer wrote (2004) – that during armed conflicts, images are used as a tool to visually identify “victims” and “enemies”. In this case, Poland seems to be the victim. Moreover, the author of the *Super Express* article writes that if the Russian-Ukrainian conflict transforms into a war then “thousands of sons of the Polish land will be called to the army to take up arms and start fighting the enemy” (*Super Express*, 05/03/2014). The dreadful prospect of Poland joining the war could be a way to connect the information and the event with the recipient. In addition, the journalists’ attention to two possible scenarios – the increase in military actions and the military threat for Poland (see Tab. 4.6) – also confirms that the dispute could have a significant meaning for the Poles. The security threat would require increasing the country’s military potential (see Tab. 4.7), partly by calling in people to fight. That is why readers of information about this event – although it takes place in another country – could view it as domestic information, relevant to them personally. More importantly, the use of the term “enemy” by the journalist confirms that the media have clearly defined who the enemy is – pointing to Russia, of course. In this way, a distinction was made between “enemy” and “victim” (see Carpentier, 2005; Galtung, 2006), with Poland included in the last category, which means that Galtung’s (2006) concept of war journalism quite accurately describes how the conflict was covered.

The necessity to modernize the armed forces, along with preparing society for dealing with a military threat, was also covered by *Fakty TVN* and *Rzeczpospolita*, which further points to a war-oriented coverage as well

as domestication. One of the Fakty TVN segments (“Army” 17/02/2015) was about the situation in Ukraine causing increased spending on armaments for the Polish army, as well as the need to modernize troops. Similar factors were indicated by the quality newspaper in the article “Modernization of the Polish Armed Forces in the context of political events in Ukraine” (*Rzeczpospolita*, 06/09/2014). These issues were also mentioned in the article entitled “Disturbance in the East forces changes in Poland’s policy,” (*Rzeczpospolita*, 17/03/2014) where it was said that the dispute forces Poland to make changes within the energy and defense sector. The spokesperson for the Ministry of Defense confirmed the need to fasten the implementation of certain defense investments, because of the situation behind the eastern border. In an interview with Stanisław Koziej, who was then the head of the National Security Bureau, there is also the information that in the longer perspective of the conflict, the “strategic threat and also invasion to Poland” cannot be excluded (*Rzeczpospolita*, “Also Poland is at risk” 03/03/2014). Drawing attention to this fact confirms that the Polish authorities recognized the dispute in Ukraine as an important factor affecting the security of the nation. That is why in the media, sometimes in quite a dramatic way, these issues were also addressed. Considering that the journalists showed how the conflict had an impact on the state of the country, as well as the actions of politicians, the audience could likely recognize this dispute as also “theirs”.



Picture 4.9: “Are you not 60 yet? You can go to the army at any time. Mobilization! When and who will be taken to the army!”.

Source: Fakt, 12/03/2014



Picture 4.10: “Poland threatened. President Komorowski is asking NATO for help”.

Source: Super Express, 03/03/2014

Because of the military threat to the country, the conflict in Ukraine was also described as making it necessary to strengthen cooperation within the international organizations which Poland belongs to. Particular attention was paid to the way NATO functions – recognizing this organization's strengthened military presence in the region as the most important reaction to what was happening in Ukraine (see Tab. 4.7). The most information on this subject appeared in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Rzeczpospolita* and *Super Express*. The tabloid drew attention to the need for Poland to obtain NATO support due to the armed operations carried out in Ukraine. In the article “Poland threatened. President Komorowski is asking NATO for help” (*Super Express*, 03/03/2014) it is said that the then President asked NATO to convene an emergency consultation under Article 4 of the North Atlantic Treaty. The President pointed out that Poland feels threatened by Russia's alleged use of force on Ukrainian soil. The material also shows the location of Poland in relation to Ukraine, Belarus and Kaliningrad (a part of Russia) and also indicates the military potential of these countries (see Picture 4.10). The graphic attached to the text shows that even if the Polish and Ukrainian armies were combined they would still have no chance to oppose Russia. That is why cooperating with NATO seems necessary if the conflict would expand outside Ukrainian borders, according to political actors and media. The coverage marked by fear of the dispute coming to Poland, especially at the beginning of the conflict, seemed to slightly change character in the latter months of the analyzed time period. A good example is an interview with the then Minister of Defense by *Gazeta Wyborcza* (“Minister of Defense: NATO troops are already in Poland”, 30–31.08.2014). Siemoniak argued that in the case of a real threat to the security of the country, NATO will be able to quickly take action to defend Poland. At the same time, he points out that it would not be possible for a foreign state to gather its troops at the Polish border without the reaction of local authorities or NATO. A similar tone appears in a *Rzeczpospolita* article (“America does not disappoint allies - an interview with Minister Tomasz Siemoniak”, 29/09/2014). There, the Minister of Defense confirms what he said in the *Gazeta Wyborcza* interview. Importantly, the greatest amount of materials referring to the military threat as one of the possible consequences of the dispute for Poland, was published in the first half of the research period – from March to the beginning of September 2014. This was directly related to the life cycle of the issue (see Fig. 2.2). Therefore, it might be that the level of domestication of the dispute was the highest in this period. This is due to the fact that it is important in the initial stage of covering an event to somehow connect the recipient to the described issue and show why it is relevant. Then it might be possible to maintain the audience's interest in the information presented further on in time.

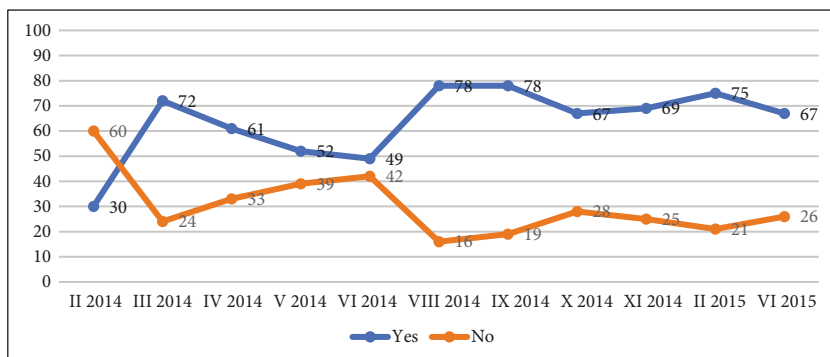
Tab. 4.7: *Scenario of the conflict (in percent).*

	<i>Fakt</i>	<i>Super Express</i>	<i>Gazeta Wyborcza</i>	<i>Rzeczpospolita</i>	Wiadomości TVP1	Fakty TVN	Total
NATO intervention	6	6	3	2	4	2	4
Economic war	10	14	26	26	25	20	22
Freezing the conflict	6	2	4	3	3	4	3
Increase in military action	38	52	56	46	55	59	52
Transition of the conflict beyond Ukraine	11	10	4	4	12	5	7
A military threat for Poland	25	13	4	6	0	8	7
Other	5	3	3	13	1	2	5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N =	109	155	302	243	212	133	1154

Source: Author

Research conducted by the Centre for Public Opinion Research on the assessment of the impact of the conflict on Polish national security, shows that the majority of respondents recognized the dispute in Ukraine as a threat to the country (see Fig. 4.1). Only in June 2014, the “yes” and “no” responses were similar. In the other months, the prevailing opinion was that the conflict in Ukraine is dangerous for Poland. Growth phases were especially noticeable in March and July 2014, and the same is observable in the life cycle of the analyzed materials (see Fig. 2.2). Therefore, it is plausible that the social fear resulting from the conflict in Ukraine could be correlated with the amount of content published about it. On the other hand, it can also be connected with specific events, such as the annexation of Crimea or the MH17 catastrophe. However, it is possible to observe some kind of agreement between the public’s opinions and the media’s point of view in relation to the perception of the dispute. Of course, it is quite difficult to clearly determine who actually affected who concerning the perception of the conflict – society or the media. The respondents admitted that their origin influenced their work. Therefore, it is also possible that the general public’s assessment of the threat to the country, as well as the consequences of the dispute, could have been affected by the social affiliation of the journalists.

There are many examples, such as the Vietnam War (see Hallin, 1986; Darley, 2005) and the Iraq War (see Dimitrova and Strömbäck, 2008; Hafez, 2003), that show that the media's influence on public opinion during armed conflicts is significant and that the media can shape social discourse. Moreover, earlier research shows that the media – especially traditional ones (see Garlicki, 2015; Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, 2017) – are an important source of information for Poles, and the analyzed media were indeed very popular in the research period (see Kurdupski, 2016a; Kurdupski, 2016b). In addition, as mentioned earlier, they have a significant impact on the agenda of other media (Instytut Monitoringu Mediów, 2014; Instytut Monitoringu Mediów, 2015). Therefore, their content may reach a large part of Polish society, thus influencing people's opinion on a given topic. The similarities between public perceptions and media frames suggest that the domestication of the conflict was effective. However, as Dimitrova and Strömbäck (2008) rightly point out, using Entman's (2004) concept of framing, an important element of the media's influence are the frames they produce. The more compatible they are – for example emotionally and culturally – with social frames, the more they can influence the opinion of society. Such similarities seem to be noticeable in the case of social frames regarding Russia (Taras, 2015) and the media's framing of Russia as the enemy. Therefore, the possibility that there is a flow and correlation between social and media discourse on the conflict in Ukraine seems to be strong.



N=1011

Fig. 4.1: *Do you think the situation in Ukraine threatens the security of Poland or not? (in percent)*

Source: Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, 2015.

The military threat was also directly associated with Russia's actions, which draws further parallels to Galtung's war journalism concept, such as focusing on "our" suffering and seeing "them" as the cause of it (Galtung, 2006: 1). This kind of information was published particularly in *Fakt*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, and *Wiadomości TVP1* (see Tab. 4.3). For example, the tabloid pointed to this element in the materials "The Russians practiced an attack on Poland" (*Super Express*, 05/03/2014) and "Poland will be alone" (*Super Express*, 04/03/2014). In the first article, the journalist writes that already in 2009 and 2013 during military exercises with Belarus, the Russians were preparing for a possible attack on Poland. Therefore, they are well prepared for a possible expansion. The invasion scenario was also described in the material "Poland will be alone" (*Super Express*, 04/03/2014), where referring to the opinions of Koziej, Sikorski and Czarnecki, it was recognized that the threat is to be taken seriously. It was also found that in case of such an attack, NATO would not be able to help Poland, and the national armed forces are not strong enough to deal with the Russian army. Military scenarios relating to the Russian threat were also presented by *Gazeta Wyborcza*. In the material "How to defend" (24/06/2014), the journalist focused on the fact that the Polish army was in bad shape. Taking into account that the conflict has put Poland in the position of a front state, it is necessary, according to the author, to modernize the army and acquire new military equipment. Only then can "David (Poland) defeat Goliath (Russia)". It seems that by using this biblical metaphor the journalist means to show that the threat of a Russian attack is real, and that it is necessary to take steps to prevent it. Also the article "Putin flexes his muscles and threatens neighbors with the vision of an invasion" (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, 19/09/2014) makes a reference to the fear of Russian aggression. The article is about discussions conducted between Poroshenko and Putin. During the conversation with the Ukrainian president, Putin is to have said that "if he would like to then in two days the Russian army would not only be in Kiev, but also in Riga, Vilnius, Tallinn, Warsaw and Bucharest" (19/09/2014). Although the Kremlin denied that these words were ever spoken, the material also relates the view of experts who argue that Putin is ready to do these things. The prospect of a Russian invasion could affect how the recipients interpret information about the conflict. Research has shown that the situation in Ukraine was considered a threat to the security of the country by most of Polish society (Fig. 4.1). That is why it seems that the media's framing could have strengthened the audience's concerns about the conflict.

The specter of a conflict in Poland, due to Russian aggression, could have made it difficult for journalists to behave objectively, as the *Rzeczpospolita* journalist points out. The respondent said that his understanding of "what the game in Ukraine is about" [R6] – also in the context of what it means for Poland – largely determined how he perceived the main actors in the dispute:

“What is happening in Ukraine is a lethal danger to my homeland and the entire region over a longer period of time. If this aggression is accepted, we will be sitting on a powder keg, and a drunkard will walk around us with a candle. I saw what the war in Yugoslavia was like in the 90’s, and it will be more or less something like that. Therefore, it is not a matter of emotion, but a matter of very cold thinking and political calculation. We cannot be on any other side but Ukraine. That is why all these impulses at the human level appeared.” [R6]

The difficulties of keeping a distance to the described issue meant that the journalist might have put his fears and anxieties into his work, which according to Rodgers (2012) was also observed for example in the case of American journalists after 9/11. The trouble of keeping distance was further confirmed by another interviewee. The war correspondent was asked about the most difficult thing he had to cope with while covering the analyzed conflict. He said that it was the proximity, both geographical and cultural with Ukraine – and also the fear of the dispute crossing over to Poland. These factors made him think that it was hard for media and society to stay distanced from what was happening on the eastern border of the country:

“I went to wars that took place very far away and when I returned from there I had the impression that they did not threaten me or my family. The fact that I was returning to a geographically and culturally different country, only strengthened my conviction. It was different with Ukraine. Although it looks and is different than Poland, it is also similar to our country. Very often I had a reflection, that dear God, it could have happened to us.” [R11]

The journalist’s perception of the Ukrainian conflict as a dispute that could be transferred to Poland could have made the materials produced by him more involved in the issue than necessary. The respondent said that just a few years before the dispute began, he did not see it coming at all. However, just like most Poles, he feared that “this war will also go to Poland”. Taking into account that the journalists recognized that the dispute in Ukraine is to some extent a threat to Poland, it might be that they made content in such a way that the recipients would perceive the event in the same way. It seems that they were using mechanisms like historical issues and fear of Russia, in order to bring the consumers closer to the event and make them consider it more important. A potential threat to Poland’s security would likely spark the interest of most Poles.

The fear of Russian expansion and the dispute coming to Poland was also noticeable in materials where the statements of Polish politicians and military representatives were shown. A good example is an interview by *Super Express* called “The Russians will be in Warsaw in three days” (13/03/2014). General Skrzypczak, who was interviewed, stated that “without NATO’s help, Poland would not defend itself” (*Super Express*, 13/03/2014) in the case of a Russian aggression against the country. The material also discusses how the Polish armed command would proceed if information about a planned attack by Russia would be obtained. Issues

concerning the military doctrine of the Russian Federation are also discussed, as well as the need to modernize the Polish army, which according to General Skrzypczak, “with such forces as it has, would not be able to do the basic task of defending the country” (*Super Express*, 13/03/2014). Paying attention to these elements, as well as giving almost the exact time that the Russian army would need to conquer the Polish capital, seem to be something that could influence the recipients’ awareness of a possible Russian attack. This fear, especially when given support by purported experts, could make readers treat the dispute as “their” conflict. The possibility of a real threat to the country in the form of Russia, was also presented in the *Rzeczpospolita* material appropriately titled “Poland is also threatened” (03/03/2014).

A particularly important material, due to its official form, and therefore its elite-oriented character (see Galtung, 2002; Galtung, 2006; Nohrstedt and Ottosen, 2014), was the message Prime Minister Tusk gave in connection with the annexation of Crimea for Fakty TVN (see Picture 4.11). The seven minute message of the politician began with the words that:

“Poland is a strong, safe and mature state, and in such a difficult and historic moment as the Ukrainian-Russian crisis and the annexation of Crimea, it is necessary to clearly and emphatically speak about it.” (“Donald Tusk: Poland means freedom”, 19/03/2014).

That Tusk’s message was broadcast by a private TV station – although it does support his party, the Civic Platform – shows that the conflict in Ukraine, especially in the context of a potential Russian assault on Poland, was considered important by the media.



Picture 4.11: “Donald Tusk: Poland means freedom”.

Source: Fakty TVN, 19/03/2014

The Prime Minister refers to the three pillars of Poland's security, listing among them democratic reforms after 1989, the position of Poland in Europe, and its membership in NATO. According to Tusk, these elements make Poland able to "look at dramatic events in the East with a sense of security" (Fakty TVN, 19/03/2014). Poland has strong ties with its western neighbors, as well as the experience of sending its army to take part in international military missions (see Tab. 4.8). Tusk also points out the fourth pillar of the country's national security, which is a "democratic, prosperous and safe Ukraine" (Fakty TVN, 19/03/2014). Therefore, the government, Europe and Polish citizens need to support this country, because it is also an investment in Polish security (see Tab. 4.7), which, as mentioned earlier, might strengthen the perception of Ukraine in terms of the "worthy" victim of the coverage (see Herman and Chomsky, 1988; Nohrstedt, 2009). This has already been mentioned in the case of the historical references and their influence on the coverage. The *Gazeta Wyborcza* journalist [R4] said that in the past, Piłsudski, Giedroyc and Mieroszewski have already pointed to the need to ensure Ukraine's independence and security, since this will also make Poland safer. Drawing attention to the need to support Ukraine in the ongoing conflict, as well as how national security is affected by the situation of this state, shows that the dispute, according to Polish authorities, has a direct impact on Poland. That is why it should be perceived by citizens as "their" conflict. Furthermore, Tusk says that Poland "does not accept and does not agree with Moscow's aggressive policy towards Ukraine" (Fakty TVN, 19/03/2014). He also points out that similar events have already taken place in the past. The Prime Minister referred in particular to World War II, but at the same time he tried to assure people that the events in Ukraine would not require present generations to take up arms. Seeing how he referred to historical issues, and pointed out that the Ukrainian conflict affects the situation of Poland, it is possible to say that Russia is once again perceived as the "enemy" of both Poland and Ukraine. Although the Prime Minister emphasized that relations with Russian citizens are and should remain friendly, the actions of the Kremlin are perceived by the authorities as threatening (see Tab. 4.5). The Prime Minister's words confirmed that Russian politicians are a party to the dispute. The fact that Russia's actions were more referenced than the separatists' gives the impression that Russia was more of a threat to Poland's security than the separatists.

Tab. 4.8: *Poland's possible reactions to the events in Ukraine (in percent).*

	<i>Fakt</i>	<i>Super Express</i>	<i>Gazeta Wyborcza</i>	<i>Rzeczpospolita</i>	Wiadomości TVP1	Fakty TVN	Total
Improving relations with Russia	0	5	2	0	2	1	2
Military presence of NATO in the region	24	26	26	29	16	23	24
Increasing military potential	17	6	8	9	7	8	9
Economic sanctions on Russia	9	9	13	7	21	15	12
Political isolation of Russia	2	4	4	2	1	6	3
Military support for Ukraine	5	9	7	8	13	9	9
Economic and political support for Ukraine	15	4	7	13	18	18	13
Cooperate with EU	12	11	2	1	1	2	4
Other	16	26	31	31	21	14	24
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N=	82	80	91	126	105	98	582

Source: Author

How the Polish authorities acted in relation to the conflict in Ukraine, especially in the context of a possible military threat from Russia, was also presented by Wiadomości TVP1. The material entitled “Strategy” (Wiadomości TVP1, 05/04/2014) referred to the President’s approval of the new National Security Strategy, which was supposed to be a response to the Ukrainian conflict. According to this document, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and particularly Russia’s actions in the region is the greatest challenge to Poland’s security (Sobera, 2015). In President Komorowski’s opinion, the strategy was based on conclusions “from what has changed for the worse to the east of Poland, where an area of instability has appeared” (“Strategy”, 05/11/2014). In addition, the then head of the Polish state points out that the military threat from Russia calls for more attention and money to the Polish army, so that it is ready to react to possible aggression. In regards to the proper response by domestic authorities to the dispute, the analyzed media most often indicated increased military potential (see Tab. 4.7). It seems that the media paying much attention to this factor as well as presenting opinions and actions of Polish authorities in response to the conflict, could make the Poles see a

clear connection between the event and their own security. According to the *Super Express* journalist, it was precisely the threat to Poland's national security that elevated people's interest in what was happening in Ukraine:

"We wondered what the war would mean for Poland. There was a dangerous period where it looked like this [Russian] expansion would cross Polish borders. That it would not stop in the Crimea or Donbass, but on the western districts of Ukraine. At that time, it would pose a direct threat to Poland, and it was certainly crucial when writing about the conflict." [R3]

The national security issue, in particular the negative perception of Russia's actions in Ukraine, was also considered by Poles to be the greatest threat to the independence and sovereignty of the country (Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, 2014: 22). Fifty-six percent of respondents saw this factor, as well as the "imperial policy of Putin's Russia" as the most serious external threat. The survey also included responses such as "the threat of military aggression from Russia" (6 %) or the "geopolitical location of Poland" (2 %) (Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, 2014: 22). Importantly, the survey was conducted in November 2014, just after the National Security Strategy was announced, and it was also commissioned by the National Security Office. Therefore, it is possible that the authorities used it to check whether the threats identified by them in the document had any effect on the citizens' attitudes. Taking into account the statement by President Komorowski, the content of the document itself, as well as the views presented by the media and society, it seems that the views of politicians, citizens and journalists are almost identical in this case. That is why there was a high chance of strengthening the feeling that the conflict in Ukraine was also a dispute between Poland and Russia, or more generally between the West and the Russia – which is a manifestation of domestication. In this way the strategy is once again seen both on the level of extroverted-domestication and also the counter-domestication (Olausson, 2013: 715–720).

In the TV and press materials, the statements of politicians were often referred to. In this way, close political links were accentuated which, like historical and economic connections, could influence the level of domestication. On the other hand, only 241 people answered the survey question, and it is not known which specific media they consumed (Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, 2014: 22). That is why it is difficult to say to what degree the views presented in the document were then reflected in the opinions prevailing in the society. It is also hard to know who in fact influenced whose opinions – if the media influenced politicians, or vice versa. In the case of the National Security Strategy, this is practically impossible to know, especially since it is usually made over several years. However, some of the journalists who were asked if they think that their work could have influenced the decisions of political actors answered that it is possible.

An example of this type of statement comes from the *Fakt* journalist. He said that the reach of his newspaper, which is in fact the most widely read daily in Poland, indicates that politicians were reading it and following the coverage as well:

“If we and a couple of millions of Poles are interested in something and they read us every day, there is also some pressure on politicians. What exactly? I do not know.” [R2]

The opinion of the journalist seems to be backed up by his colleague, who claims that tabloids act as a social barometer, showing politicians how much society is interested in a given issue. The respondent adds that by posting specific comments and questions – “What is Poland’s reaction? Is Poland in some way threatened?” – it was possible to exert pressure on politicians, because “this subject was still alive for them” [R1]. Therefore, the tabloids devoted a lot of attention to the consequences of the dispute (see Tab. 3.1) and the reactions that should be taken by politicians (see Tab. 4.7).

The *Gazeta Wyborcza* journalist agreed that the media can exert influence on political actors. The respondent claims that this can happen by politicians consuming specific media, which are addressed to a specific target group. The journalist believes that politicians in turn can use the context given by the media when presenting their message to various types of electorate and thus “soothe or stimulate their [Russophobic] fears to influence political elections [choices]” [R4]. The respondent thinks that the then presidential administration associated with the Civic Platform tried, for example, to spread a message of security, to let the Polish society understand that it is “more or less assured” [R4]. Indeed, when looking at materials presenting the statements of the then President and Prime Minister of the country, as well as other ministers, it is possible to observe that these politicians tried to assure the people that they were safe, despite the threat posed by Russia. Furthermore, another respondent [R5] notes that the politicians’ references to certain roles, quite clearly defined by society, such as “enemy” or “threat”, could be transferred by them to the media as well as the political level:

“It happens that we have political debates about this conflict. Politicians try to use it when talking about the threat [to the country]. It is [a threat], because the world after 1989 or 1991, I am talking here about Poland and Europe, was never so close to another global conflict.” [R5]

Although the ability to investigate the real impact that the media could exert on political actors and vice versa is difficult, and impossible in the case of this research, it seems that presenting the government’s opinions could to some degree strengthen domestication. The recipients could in this way be made to feel that if the conflict requires specific actions by their political representatives, like defending the country and supporting Ukraine, it does concern them directly. That

in turn makes people want to follow the coverage about the conflict. Furthermore, by referring to the military and economic threat to Poland, with Russia as the main enemy, the journalists could have effectively domesticated the conflict.

4.2.2 Economic sanctions

Domestication can also be the result of globalization, which manifests itself through the existence of for example economy connections at the international level (Lee, 2005; Held et al., 1999). These connections were used by the media as a factor serving to draw social as well as political attention to the Ukrainian conflict. Similar to the military threat of the country, economic sanctions – in particular by Russia – were also regarded by journalists as important consequences of the dispute for Poland, which confirms the second research hypothesis. Although they accounted for 16 percent of all indications, just as the “other” category, the impact of economic sanctions on the country could have affected the use of this issue as a part of domestication. The *Gazeta Wyborcza* journalist was asked if he believes that the Polish media’s interest in the Ukrainian conflict is sufficient. He replied that in his opinion “it is difficult to find another country where so much attention is devoted to this dispute” [R4]. The respondent added that the amount of attention these events were given in the media was partly because of their impact on the situation in Poland:

“If you go through the headlines of most newspapers, there are more headlines about the situation in Ukraine or situations that are a result of Ukraine. For example, about sanctions or the actions of the European Union towards Russia.” [R4]

Economic sanctions, but not only those imposed on Russia, were therefore the theme that the journalists had the greatest interest in (see Tab. 3.1). Furthermore, economic war was presented by the media just after “increase in military actions”, as the most likely further scenario of the dispute (see Tab. 4.7). Also in the context of how Polish authorities should react in regards to the situation in Ukraine, it was quite often pointed to the need to impose economic sanctions on Russia (see Tab. 4.8). It seems that the media’s attention to this factor was directly related to the Kremlin’s actions toward Poland. It should be noted that economic sanctions from Russia constituted ten percent of all covered conflict consequences for Poland (see Tab. 4.6). This issue was most often covered by *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Wiadomości TVP1*, *Fakty TVN* and *Fakt*.

The “Eat apples to annoy Putin” campaign (The Economist, 2014), which referred to the need to support Polish fruit farmers in connection with the embargo imposed by Russia on domestic vegetables and fruits, was particularly well-presented. Information on this subject appeared in the *Wiadomości TVP* and *Gazeta Wyborcza* materials. The campaign to defend native farmers,

its popularity in social media, as well as the impact that the Russian embargo had on the Polish economy, was described by *Gazeta Wyborcza* in the article entitled “Temporary Russian embargo will not be over soon. Let’s eat apples” (01/08/2014) (see Picture 4.12). The journalist writes that “when buying apples we support producers of the state budget in their misfortune, and thus ourselves” (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, 01/08/2014). This sentence is a fairly good example of how the media tried to bring the dispute closer to the audience by referring to its consequences, which in fact had a significant impact on the country during the analyzed period. The journalist also points out that although the purpose of the campaign is right and that it can certainly help the farmers in reducing their losses, it is not really enough. The government and the West need to give support as well. National solidarity expressed through this kind of activism may indicate that, as in the case of historical and military factors, the perception of Russia as an “enemy” and the dispute as “ours” could also be noticed at the economic level.

The symbolism of the dispute, especially in the context of the described social action, was also presented in the material “Eat apples!” (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, 02–03/08/2014). The author of the article indicates that Poland, and more precisely Polish farmers, are the first victim of the sanctions imposed by the European Union on Russia. That is why it is necessary to show “consumerism patriotism”, which can be seen as a form of retaliation against the Russian authorities. It seems that the media when covering these issues, as well as speaking in an almost personal way to recipients – as exemplified by the *Gazeta Wyborcza* articles – could have made the Polish audience very interested in the topic of economic sanctions. This is due to the fact that, according to Joye, the possibility of identifying with the victims – in this case Polish citizens – creates an emotional bond that strengthens the efficiency of domestication (2015: 685–687).

The public also felt substantial effects from the sanctions, which they did not do from the military threat. The Poles’ attempt to reduce the effects of the Russian economic sanctions on fruits and vegetables was also presented by Wiadomości TVP1. In one of its segments entitled “Apples in protest” (Wiadomości TVP1, 01/08/2014), the TV program indicated that the economic sanctions were very serious for Poland, since this country is the largest exporter of apples in Europe. The material also discusses possible ways to solve the problem, both through the campaign “Eat apples to annoy Putin” and decisions by the European Union. The then Minister of Agriculture Sawicki, said that he would like to get at least some compensation for his country in the crisis “that was not caused by Polish producers and Poland” (Wiadomości TVP1, 01/08/2014). Although social action is an interesting idea, it will not solve the problem of fruit farmers, said Sawicki. The need to fix the problem as quickly and as positively as possible was

presented in the material “Apples of discord” (Wiadomości TVP1, 03/08/2014). The title of the material is a metaphor that refers both to the conflict at the international level with Russia, and to the intra-state dispute. In Poland, the Law and Justice party thought that the seven years of the Civic Platform and the Polish People's Party coalition government had not prepared Poland for the scenario of a Russian embargo on Polish products. That is why the opposition – the Law and Justice – demands a quick reaction from the authorities and threatens them with a motion to dismiss the Minister of Agriculture. The indication in the television materials of Poland as a victim of Russia's actions, and the transfer of the dispute from the international to the state level, could make the audience consider the conflict as important and affecting their lives. Changes to the national policy in connection with the economic war, or problems concerning the state budget, are factors that affect ordinary citizens. Other information regarding the dispute could then be received by the audience in a similar manner, due to the previously created bond resulting from the perception of the dispute as a possible threat to the state. Moreover, the frequent reference to the role of Russia can, as mentioned earlier, itself be a form of domestication because of the so-called Russophobia and the general impression that Poles have of Russia.



Picture 4.12: “Temporary Russian embargo will not over soon. Let’s eat apples!”.

Source: Gazeta Wyborcza, 01/08/2014



Picture 4.13: “Putin declared economic war on Poland”.

Source: Fakt, 08/08/2014

The negative attitude toward the Russian authorities for their economic sanctions on Poland was also presented in the tabloid materials. *Fakt* referred to it in the articles entitled “The president of Russia forbids the import of fruit and vegetables from Poland. Putin takes revenge on Polish farmers” (31/07/2014), “Putin declared economic war on Poland” (08/08/2014) and “Russia does not want our beef” (02/07/2014). In the first *Fakt* article, the journalist indicates that the consequences of the conflict in Ukraine are not limited to only military issues, but also affect the economy. Polish fruit farmers may be particularly affected, and Putin’s decision may put them into bankruptcy, according to the journalist. Therefore, the concept of the “worthy” victim (see Herman and Chomsky, 1988) also finds its application in the case of the Polish food producers and farmers, whose troubles the media took a great interest in.

A similar rhetoric is presented in the publication “Putin declared economic war on Poland” (*Fakt*, 08/08/2014), where the writer also referred to Russia’s meat sanctions. The possible losses that Polish producers should bear in connection to the actions of the Kremlin were shown in a table (see Picture 4.13). It seems that sketching the real effects of the economic war is done to make the recipient realize the great influence that the dispute in Ukraine is having on Poland – especially in the context of the actions of Polish authorities and the European Union of which Poland is a member. Journalists point out bluntly that the Russian embargo will be felt not only for the producers themselves, but also for ordinary citizens, which puts Putin’s economic sanctions directly into their life. It is therefore a repetition of the rhetoric presented in the article “Temporary Russian embargo will not be over soon. Let’s eat apples” (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, 01/08/2014). It is also a confirmation that although the Polish media differ from each other in the nature of content produced and the level of political parallelism, they described the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in a similar way, developing a kind of consensus – especially in how the parties to the conflict were portrayed and the role of Poland in the dispute. Interestingly, in the case of the first two *Fakt* articles, only the actions of the President of Russia were mentioned, which makes it possible to notice a kind of negativism shown by the journalists in how they portray the actor responsible for the sanctions. This was also noticeable in the case of the coverage of the dominant and secondary actors (see Tab. 3.10 and 3.11), which showed that the negative perception of Russia refers to political actors to a large extent, rather than civilians. It is also worth noting that both materials used the same picture of Putin, which could be meant as a visualization of how he acted toward Poland (see Picture 4.13). In the image, the president looks like he wants to put his hand on someone’s throat, for example the Polish producers. It appears that this is a way to emphasize Poland’s

role of victim in the story, while Putin's aggressiveness is not so subtly illustrated. This is a kind of duplication of the frames used by journalists when describing military threats or referring to historical issues. The media when describing the threat associated with the Russian-Ukrainian conflict could refer to its wider definitions, but still define Russia as an "enemy." It seems that in this way the media could influence the recipients' general assessment of the dispute expressed in the dominant perspective of the coverage (see Tab. 3.12), as well as deepen certain patterns of perception of the parties to the conflict created in the past.

Super Express and *Gazeta Wyborcza* also referred directly to Putin's actions. The tabloid did it in the article entitled "Putin's madness will hit you in the pocket" (*Super Express*, 04/03/2014), where economists pointed out that the prolonged conflict in Ukraine may lead to a weakening of the zloty, raised taxes and elevated prices for fuel and food. *Gazeta Wyborcza* in the article entitled "Embargo for the West. Putin's retaliation for sanctions" (07/08/2014) also says that Putin has decided to introduce annual sanctions on agricultural products and foodstuffs to European Union member states. Due to the fact that Poland is a member of the European Community, and strongly opted for imposing economic sanctions on Russia due to the conflict in Ukraine, Putin made the decision to punish Poland directly. This was already indicated in the previously described articles. It is also an indication to ties that are important from the point of view of domestication – in this case, created at the level of the European Community. The media's presentation of the negative effects felt by Poland, because of Russia's imposition of sanctions on the European Union, may strengthen the recipients' feeling that the Kremlin's activities directly affect the domestic situation. Therefore, it also seems that information relating to the European Union's activities could be treated to a certain degree by the audience as something relevant for Poland, which is one of the premises of domestication.

Economic issues as general consequences of the dispute were also visible in the coverage. In the *Gazeta Wyborcza* material entitled "This conflict will hit Polish companies" (04/03/2014), the impact that the turmoil in Ukraine could have on the country's economic growth was referred to. The writer claims that the escalation of the conflict could hit domestic exports and limit the investment capacity of companies due to uncertainty about their future. Also in the Fakty TVN material ("Sanctions", 08/08/2014) a reference is made to the general consequences of economic sanctions – this time for the EU member states, which just like Poland will have to deal with the effects of the Kremlin's decisions. The journalist emphasizes in the material that in this situation, it will be difficult for Poland to obtain satisfactory compensation for its losses since the European Union will have more countries to help. The effect of the situation in Ukraine on

the Polish economy was also covered in the *Fakt* material called “Will war not harm gas supplies to Poland?” (12/04/2014). The title in the form of a question about the future of Poland’s gas security referred to the statement of the head of one of the Polish gas companies, who said he believes the situation in Ukraine will not affect Poland’s access to the important resource. At the same time, the material presented possible alternatives in case Russia decided to block the gas supply to Poland. Drawing attention to possible consequences of the situation in Ukraine for Poland, as well as to possible ways of solving the problems that might arise, could have made the domestic recipient interested in following the coverage of the conflict – especially since the mentioned effects forces Polish authorities and companies to take preventive action. It seems that these factors and issues relating to the state of the European Union and the problematic sanctions, could have made Polish recipients think that the Ukrainian conflict was a concern for them.

Although the difference between how often the military and economic threat was brought up was 35 percentage points (see Tab. 4.6), it is difficult to draw the conclusion that economic matters were considered unimportant for the recipients – especially since the research made by the Centre for Public Opinion Research referred to both economic and military threats (see Fig. 4.1). Therefore, it seems that the reference to economic sanctions, as a possible mechanism for domesticating the conflict, could, as in the case with a military threat, be an effective solution. In addition, these issues also referred to certain contexts and frames – for example the “enemy” and the “victims” – that could allow recipients to observe some kind of continuity in the perception of the parties to the conflict and Poland or organizations in which the country is a member. Therefore, the real impact of the Ukrainian crisis on Poland’s economic situation could have made recipients see information about the dispute as domestic information, and the event itself as “our” conflict.

Summary

The conflict in Ukraine was domesticated by the Polish media by referring to historical issues (see Tab. 4.1 and 4.2) and the military and economic threat to the state (see Tab. 4.5). These factors allowed journalists to strengthen and create a kind of connection between the recipient and the covered event. This was done mainly by reference to the impact of the dispute on Poland, as well as by describing the conflict through the prism of events, frames and historical contexts with certain connotations for Poles. In particular those relating to defining the “enemy” (see Tab. 4.4), which in the case of the analyzed conflict

was Russia. Although historical references appeared relatively frequently in the materials, constituting an important mechanism of domestication and showing the audience how to decode the information, the national interest seemed more important to journalists. Historical frames were often used, but it was more common for the journalists to present information where Poland and Poles were “worthy” victims of this dispute in the present (see Herman and Chomsky, 1988; Nohrstedt, 2009). Therefore, the content analysis results and the interviews with journalists showed that the second research hypothesis – that stressing the threat to the economic and military security of Poland was the dominant tool of domestication of the conflict by the media – was confirmed.

Most of the times that the consequences of the dispute for Poland were brought up, the economic and military elements were emphasized (see Tab. 4.6). Also the conflict scenarios presented by the media, such as economic war, transition of the conflict beyond Ukraine and military threat for Poland were directly related to these factors, which proves that journalists recognized them as important issues (see Tab. 4.7). What also confirms the hypothesis is the data about how the Polish authorities should react to the dispute on the eastern border of the country – in particular the need to impose economic sanctions on Russia, increase the military potential of the state and cooperating with NATO in the region (see Tab. 4.8). It seems that Polish media referring to these factors could have made domestic recipients – mainly due to the fear of an economic and military threat to the country – perceive information about the dispute in Ukraine as nationally relevant information. As a result, they could recognize that Poland is also a side of the conflict due to the authorities’ commitment to resolving the dispute, Poland’s membership in NATO and the European Union, and the impact of Russia’s actions on the security of the country. The media’s references to Russia’s negative actions, both in the economic and military context (see Tab. 4.6) could therefore make this country recognized as the “enemy”.

The perception of Russia as an “enemy”, often noticeable in materials devoted to the consequences of the dispute for Poland, was also strengthened by historical references (see Tab. 4.1), where the conflict in Ukraine was compared to past events where Russia participated, and sometimes was an aggressor toward Poland. One example of that is World War II (see Tab. 4.2). References were also made to events such as the Russo-Georgian war, where Polish political actors were strongly involved, and which were also considered a possible threat to the country. The comparisons to both World War II and the Russo-Georgian war showed that the media tried to indicate that the element linking Poland and Ukraine was that they were both “victims” of Russian actions. This factor, apart from the economic and military threat described in the materials, could have

caused the Ukrainian conflict to be presented by journalists as an event concerning Poland directly. In regards to the dominant and secondary actor (see Tab. 3.10 and 3.11), as well as historical issues (see Tab. 4.4) and the consequences of the dispute for Poland (see Picture 4.13), Putin was often in the spotlight. In the case of historical frames, the “enemy” was demonized and personified through comparisons to figures such as Hitler and Stalin, which are very negatively associated by society. At the same time, it seems that references to historical figures and events could be a manifestation of domestication. Historical and cultural references, mainly due to their durability, help recipients decode information in a specific way. Therefore, the perception by the media of Russia as the “enemy” of Poland was presented through an historical, economic and military prism, and also by reference to the threat to Ukraine – a country whose security and independence, according to journalists and politicians, has a great influence on Polish security. In the research made by the Centre for Public Opinion Research, it was possible to observe that the Polish society also perceived the conflict in Ukraine as a threat to the country (see Fig. 4.1). It can therefore be seen that the media discourse coincided to a certain extent with social and government discourse. It is important to keep in mind that, as shown by research done by Garlicki (2015) and other reports from the Centre for Public Opinion Research (2017), the media – especially traditional ones – is an important source of information for Polish people. Therefore, it seems that the journalists’ references to certain contexts – especially the context of the “enemy” – that can have a strong effect on people’s consciousness, could have made the domestication of the conflict effective. It is also possible that the content presented by the analyzed media could have influenced the public’s views regarding the dispute.

Conclusion

This book aimed to describe how the Russian-Ukrainian conflict was covered and domesticated by different Polish media outlets in 2014 and 2015. Taking into account the impact of the conflict on the security of Poland, broadly understood, as well as the extent to which historical and cultural factors can shape the mutual perceptions of Poland and the parties to the conflict, it was decided to study what perspective – pro-Russian or pro-Ukrainian – characterized the media coverage. The purpose was also to check whether the negative consequences of the dispute – the military and economic threat to Poland – were used as tools for domestication.

Two research hypotheses were formulated in the study:

H1: An anti-Russian perspective is dominant in the Polish media coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

H2: Stressing the threat to the economic and military security of Poland was the dominant tool of domestication of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict by the Polish media.

Both research hypotheses have been confirmed. The first research hypothesis has been proven correct both by the content analysis and the interviews with journalists. Seventy five percent of all material had a pro-Ukrainian perspective. This in turn is the sum of the support for Ukraine in general (45 %), Ukrainian authorities (21 %), and Ukrainian army (9 %). The largest support for Ukraine was expressed by *Super Express* (96 %) and *Wiadomości TVP1* (79 %). *Fakt* (39 %) and *Fakty TVN* (40 %) most often among the analyzed media covered the conflict neutrally. Only *Gazeta Wyborcza* expressed any support for the Russian authorities, but it was only in one percent of all articles and it was rather the result of quoting others than the opinion of the journalist. The anti-Russian attitude was also evident in the case of the dominant and the secondary actor. Although the rebels were covered the most negatively (81 % as the dominant actor and 69 % as the secondary actor), taking into account the amount of materials where the Russian authorities were the dominant (69 %) and secondary actor (61 %) it can be seen that these were presented in the most negative way by the media. Negativism was also expressed toward the Russian military (68 % as the dominant actor and 66 % as the secondary actor), as well as Russian citizens (25 % as the dominant actor and 50 % as the secondary actor). However, Russian citizens were also often presented in a neutral way, which shows that journalists

did not recognize them as a side of the war. Furthermore, Ukrainian actors were presented neutrally. Only three percent of news stories on the Ukrainian authorities (2 % as the dominant actor and 1 % as the secondary actor) and two percent of stories on the Ukrainian army (secondary actor) had a negative slant. The Ukrainian side (20 % in total) was quoted more often than the Russian (12 % in total) which seems to further confirm the hypothesis. This is due to the fact that Russian politicians and media (73 %) were regarded as most responsible for spreading disinformation and fake news, which was confirmed by the interviewed journalists. This also seems to relate to the propaganda-oriented function of war journalism described by Galtung (2006), where exposing the enemy's lies is important – and Russia is seen as the enemy by Poles (Taras, 2015). The recognition that the conflict's main causes were “Russian support for separatists” (53 %) and “Russian invasion” (34 %), and the conflict being a “dispute between the state and non-state actors supported by other state” (46 %) and “between states” (44 %) also confirms that the Polish media clearly thought that Russia played a role in the events. Calling the events in Ukraine a “war” (46 %), and the pro-Russian side for example “Russians” (26 %), confirms the anti-Russian attitude of the journalists, as well as the predominance of this perspective in the media coverage. It also shows quite clearly that the media, while covering Russia's actions and supporting Ukraine, acted according to Hallin's sphere of consensus (1986), for example taking it for granted that Russia was the aggressor that should be condemned. Some of the interviewed journalists also pointed to the role of social factors such as Russophobia, the influence of their origin on relations with parties to the conflict, national interest and historical relations expressed by the fear of Russian expansion (38 %), which confirms that they acted in a partisan way (see Russ-Mohl, 2013; Sreedharan, 2013). Compassion for Ukraine was also an important factor which originated, *inter alia*, in Poland's negative historical experiences with Russia, as well as being able to relate to Ukraine's situation. This allowed journalists to assess the event through the prism of “us/victims” – Ukraine and Poland, versus “them/aggressor” – Russia.

The second research hypothesis was also confirmed, which shows that the conflict was domesticated by the media, because they pointed to economic and political connections between Poland, the parties to the conflict and the European Union (see Lee, 2005; Qadir and Alasuutari, 2013). Pointing to negative economic (16 %) and military (51 %) consequences of the dispute for Poland, understood as a threat to national security, were the most frequently used tools of the strategy. The consequences of the conflict were also the second most frequently covered topic (12 %), which confirms that the journalists actually addressed this issue, trying to show the recipient that there was a Polish angle to the story. It

was the most often covered topic by tabloids (36 %), which may have to do with sensationalism and the fear of Russia's actions, which the journalists from these media emphasized. *Fakt* (27 %), just after *Gazeta Wyborcza* (29 %) wrote about these issues most often. Although the military threat in general (30 %) outweighs the military threat from Russia (21 %), when it comes to the economic threat the situation is slightly different (economic consequences in general – 6 %; economic sanctions from Russia – 10 %). It can then be noted that Russia's role in the domestication of the conflict was significant, which was also reflected in Poland's possible reactions to the events in Ukraine – for example, “economic sanctions on Russia” (12 %), “military presence of NATO in the region” (24 %) and “increasing military potential” (9 %). The two last reactions may be related to the most commonly presented dispute scenario, which was an “increase in military action” (52 %), but also to “economic war” (22 %) which came second. The materials often specified that these reactions followed from Russia's actions and fears of them. Historical factors that appeared in 14 percent of the materials strengthened this feeling, which may be related to the anti-Russian perspective of the coverage. The journalists referred, for example, to World War II and compared Putin to Hitler and Stalin, and thus demonized Russia (see Ottosen, 1995; Wolsfeld, 2004; Galtung, 2006). The most historical references were – once again – found in the tabloids (36 %), which may have something to do with the fact that the journalists admitted their task is to simplify reality for the audience. Firstly, by focusing on the Polish angle in foreign news stories, secondly by referring to issues that can easily be understood by Poles (see Clausen, 2004; Taradai, 2012), so that they are decoded in an unambiguous way. Historical contexts seem to exemplify such issues (Gurevitch et al., 1991), and most of the interviewees said that they played an important role in the coverage. They pointed to the proximity of Poland and Ukraine, and that they have similar experiences of Russian aggression. The coverage also made reference to Ukraine's security being a guarantee of Poland's security, which was what journalists and politicians were saying at the time. Polish politicians were the most often quoted source by the media (13 %), which also is a manifestation of domestication, especially since discussions on the situation in Ukraine and its impact on the country were held at the national level. Covering Poland's actions within the European Union and NATO is also a kind of domestication, because in this way journalists referred to a universal, or at least Western, system of values (Olausson, 2013), which brings the audience closer to understanding the dispute and its parties in terms of “us” and “them”.

Verifying the hypotheses has not been without its issues. I based my work on research tools created for the international research project “Ukraine

2014 – media war and the war in media”, but due to the necessity of making some changes, especially to the code book, the research materials had to be coded once again. I am also aware that the code book had some limitations, including, for example, detailed questions regarding the MH17 catastrophe which were used for a case study in the aforementioned research project but had no such purpose in my research. It seems, however, that the data obtained can be used in subsequent analyzes, if it has not already found its application. It is also problematic to assess qualitative issues, such as the perspective of the coverage, and the contexts visible in the materials, without adding a substantial dose of the researcher’s subjectivity.

The sequence of research tasks began with the content analysis of the collected materials, and continued with in-depth interviews with journalists who covered the conflict.

I could easily access the newspapers through the library, but access to television materials – especially to the Polish Television – required a number of permissions from the company’s administration. The waiting period for those materials lasted longer than expected. Talking to journalists also had its difficulties, because as mainstream media employees they did not always have time to talk. Some of the journalists also declined to be interviewed, and I realize that the research sample may be in some sense insufficient and that it would be preferable to conduct more interviews. Furthermore, some of the questions asked – for example those relating to the role of journalists in conflicts, the impact of historical factors on the coverage and possible difficulties in accessing the parties to the conflict resulting from the journalists’ origin – seemed difficult and at times sensitive, which is why some of the obtained answers were unsatisfactory. I tried to solve this problem by asking follow-up questions to get honest and truthful responses.

Certain problems are also posed by defining domestication, which is a part of the second research hypothesis and which is hardly described at all in Polish scientific literature. It was therefore difficult to refer to similar studies, especially on the national level, that addressed this issue. I tried to adopt the definitions used by foreign researchers, for example Hjarvard (2001), Taradai (2014) and Joye (2015), who pointed to elements that were studied closely for this book. Moreover, the relatively low number of national publications on the coverage of armed conflicts, in particular the role of journalists in presenting such phenomena, constituted a certain limitation. Of course, several studies on the coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict by the Polish media have been done (see Głowacki and Smolak, 2016; Szostok et al., 2016; Laboratorium Badań Medioznawczych, 2017a; Smolak, 2017), but, as mentioned earlier, most of these

studies often only analyze one type of medium, without including interviews with journalists. Furthermore, often only a short fragment of the dispute was examined. It would probably have been easier to make the study if there had been more previous research to compare the results to. Then I could have compared the ways in which Polish media and journalists operate in this area, especially since according to Russ-Mohl (2013), social factors and national culture strongly affect the behavior of journalists covering conflict (2013). Sreedharan (2013) and Wolsfeld (2004) also pointed to the importance of ethnocentrism in covering wars – including external ones. Therefore, if there would have been an opportunity to refer to Polish analyzes taking into account these factors more broadly, the analysis of the described phenomenon could have been more complete.

The research techniques and methods used in the study made it possible to answer the formulated research questions and verify the hypotheses. I am aware, however, that the qualitative elements of the content analysis, as well as the results of the in-depth interviews, are marked by a certain amount of subjectivism – both the researcher's and the respondents'. This could be used as a point of criticism against this study. In the case of the content analysis, coding certain frames and contexts in the materials depended largely on the researcher's knowledge of prejudices and social beliefs, and what is also particularly important in the case of my research – history. However, knowing about these factors was necessary in order for me to be able to identify them. Furthermore, I realize that the very fact of my nationality can also be seen as a limitation. I could, although unintentionally, perceive certain events and actors through the prism of prejudices present in Polish society. Also, as mentioned earlier, the sample of respondents could be considered low, especially since the number of interviewed journalists from each media outlet was not the same. Therefore, it is possible to talk about an underrepresentation of some of the outlets. I tried to solve this problem by searching for respondents from outside the analyzed media, who could talk about their work and also give opinions on the coverage of the event by the six analyzed media. It seems that in this way the perspective of the research could be broadened. Finally, using reports from the Centre for Public Opinion Research (2014 and 2015), although they presented the general opinion of the public and not the recipients of particular media, was helpful in understanding why journalists used specific mechanisms to cover and domesticate the conflict in Ukraine. I am aware that these reports probably do not fully reflect reality – because the research sample only covers a part of society – but the tendencies presented seem to reflect a certain general trend.

The research goals set for the study have been met. I have managed to present how the Russian-Ukrainian conflict was covered by the Polish media – different

in terms of political parallelism, business model and type of content presented – which is an undeniable advantage of the study. In this way it is possible to make an addition to both the domestic and international state of research on this subject. Earlier research focused mainly on one type of media, while ignoring the viewpoint of journalists, which seems to be a limitation. This work can therefore complement some of the shortcomings in this area. Some differences in the coverage could be noticed – for example, the most frequently presented topics and the sources quoted, as well as domestication mechanisms. However, it was also observed that in the situation of the conflict in Ukraine, these differences were not so significant, and to a large degree the Polish media spoke with one voice. This shows that the shared national perspective and some kind of national prejudices might be stronger than the individual differences between the media – something that could be observed in the main coverage perspective. Paying attention to the influence of context-oriented factors on the coverage, it is also important that the studied media are, and certainly were in the research period, the most popular media outlets in Poland (see Kurdupski, 2016a; Kurdupski 2016b), which influenced the agenda of other media (see Instytut Monitoringu Mediów, 2014; Instytut Monitoringu Mediów, 2015). In this way their content could reach more recipients and further influence people's perception of the event. It was also noticed that the proximity of the dispute and the fear of it spreading to Poland, as well as historical and cultural patterns, indeed had an impact on the coverage and an effect on the journalists' behavior. The use of these elements in the coverage also confirms that the dispute was domesticated by the Polish media. The domestication mechanisms used by Polish journalists were found and characterized, as well as their impact on the general, pro-Ukrainian perspective of the coverage, which the analysis also found. It therefore confirms that this goal of the study has been achieved. It seems that the detailed discussion of the mechanisms of domestication used by journalists, as well as the references to the interviews where journalists talked, for instance, about Russophobia and a general fear of the dispute spreading to Poland, is also an advantage of the study. Although many papers have been written about the role of journalists, as well as the impact of media-politics relations, there are not many analyzes that are directly about conflict reporting in Poland. Describing to what extent the hybrid nature of the dispute influenced the work of journalists is also helpful when it comes to understanding how the media works when presenting such an event compared to other kinds of disputes.

In the future, it would be worth expanding on the comparable research that has already been done and refining the analyzed issues. In my opinion, it could be better to use the criteria of political parallelism when choosing media to analyze,

and not only popularity. In this way, it would be possible to check whether the one national perspective is also reflected in the case of media that are different in this regard. Half of the analyzed media outlets had a rather neutral attitude toward the former government, while *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Wiadomości TVP1* and *Fakty TVN* showed strong support for the Civic Platform in the research period (see Mielczarek, 2007; Bajomi-Lazar, 2014: 110), so perhaps the more hardline right-wing media perspective was lacking. Although the research of the Laboratory of Media Studies (2017a) included press titles that varied in terms of their support for political forces, the main factor in the selection of these media was their popularity. Therefore, the newspapers that were characterized by a strong political profile might have been omitted because they were not the most widely read newspapers in Poland. This is also reflected in the lack of interviews with journalists representing politically diverse views. A certain research gap can therefore be identified, which future analyzes can fill.

Future research could also supplement my analysis with an analysis of materials from 2015 to 2018, since the conflict in Ukraine continued in this time period. Although the coverage of the dispute by the Polish media intensified during the period analyzed in this study, the so-called Kerch Strait Incident from November 2018 and its repercussions was one of the most important topics in the Polish media agenda for some time. Therefore, extending the research period and carrying out additional analyzes could help determine how the situation in Ukraine has been presented by the Polish media over time, and if any changes have occurred.

In my opinion, it would also be interesting to extend the analysis to the internet, for example by analyzing web portals, to see if the perspective of the conflict visible in that media coverage was similar to that presented by traditional media. It is true that the preliminary analyzes carried out by me showed that the three most popular web portals in Poland – *Wp.pl*, *Onet.pl*, and *Gazeta.pl* – covered the dispute in accordance with the pro-Ukrainian perspective (Smolak, 2017). However, only the period from February to April 2014 was examined. It is possible that this perspective could have changed somewhat in time. It would be necessary to carry out analyzes over a longer research period, as well as taking into account the diversity of portals, for instance political. In addition, the nature of these media, as well as the mechanisms used by them, is different from those noticeable in the press or television. To investigate whether the coverage of the dispute had a war-oriented character – like in the traditional media – or not, therefore seems interesting. It would also be interesting to test the functionality of the model developed by Nygren, which is based on traditional media, on “new” media (Nygren and Hök, 2016: 261). In the case of the internet, it is also

important to define and investigate who creates the content presented by portals. It could for example be professional journalists, but also the audience itself – so-called citizen journalists. Furthermore, extending the analysis to web portals could allow – more than in the case of traditional media – to examine social responses expressed in the form of comments below the content. The journalist's ability to engage with the audience – for instance through the comment section – is also interesting. It would be possible to observe the interaction between these entities, and at the same time see how the media is affected by society when reporting on armed conflicts.

Appendix

Appendix no. 1: Code book

General Information:

1. Medium

- 1.1. *Gazeta Wyborcza*
- 1.2. *Rzeczpospolita*
- 1.3. *Fakt*
- 1.4. *Super Express*
- 1.5. Wiadomości TVP1
- 1.6. Fakty TVN

2. Date:

- 2.1. March 2014
- 2.2. April 2014
- 2.3. May 2014
- 2.4. June 2014
- 2.5. July 2014
- 2.6. August 2014
- 2.7. September 2014
- 2.8. October 2014
- 2.9. November 2014
- 2.10. December 2014
- 2.11. January 2015
- 2.12. February 2015
- 2.13. March 2015

3. Place

- 3.1. Front page
- 3.2. Inside – biggest story on the page
- 3.3. Inside – minor on the page

4. Space

- 4.1. Full page
- 4.2. Half page
- 4.3. Quarter of a page
- 4.4. Less than quarter

5. Genre

- 5.1. News report
- 5.2. Background/analysis
- 5.3. Feature reporting
- 5.4. Interview
- 5.5. Column
- 5.6. Vox pop
- 5.7. Quote (not related to any article)

Analysis**6. General theme of the story**

- 6.1. International political discussion and sanctions
- 6.2. NATO intervention
- 6.3. Military actions in the conflict area
- 6.4. Consequences for civilians in the conflict area
- 6.5. Pro-Russian rebels and their actions
- 6.6. Russian involvement (in general)
- 6.7. Russian military involvement in the conflict
- 6.8. Military support for Ukraine from Poland
- 6.9. Economic and political support for Ukraine from Poland
- 6.10. MH17
- 6.11. Consequences of the conflict for Poland
- 6.12. Relations between Poland and parties to the conflict
- 6.13. Negotiations and peace agreements
- 6.14. Russian Humanitarian convoy
- 6.15. Stories on Ukrainian military (not fighting)
- 6.16. Annexation of Crimea and its consequences
- 6.17. Stories on the Ukrainian government
- 6.18. Other

7. What kind of consequences for Poland are described in the material?

- 7.1. Military threat (in general)
- 7.2. Military threatens from Russia
- 7.3. Economic consequences (in general)
- 7.4. Economic sanctions from Russia
- 7.5. Deterioration of relations with Russia
- 7.6. Immigration

- 7.7. Threat to Polish citizens living in Ukraine
- 7.8. Other
- 7.9. No consequences described
- 8. **How should Poland react to the events in Ukraine?**
 - 8.1. Improving relations with Russia
 - 8.2. Military presence of NATO in the region
 - 8.3. Increasing military potential
 - 8.4. Economic sanctions on Russia
 - 8.5. Political isolation of Russia
 - 8.6. Military support for Ukraine
 - 8.7. Economic and political support for Ukraine
 - 8.8. Cooperate with EU
 - 8.9. Ukraine's approach to Europe
 - 8.10. Other
 - 8.11. No reactions described
- 9. **Main perspective on the article**
 - 9.1. Support for Ukraine in general
 - 9.2. Support for Ukrainian authorities
 - 9.3. Support for Ukrainian army
 - 9.4. Support for Russian authorities
 - 9.5. Support for Russian army
 - 9.6. Support for separatists
 - 9.7. Neutral
 - 9.8. Other
- 10. **Dominant actor in the article**
 - 10.1. Polish authorities
 - 10.2. Polish citizens
 - 10.3. Ukrainian authorities
 - 10.4. Ukrainian military
 - 10.5. Ukrainian citizens
 - 10.6. Civilians in the conflict area
 - 10.7. Rebels
 - 10.8. Russian authorities
 - 10.9. Russian military
 - 10.10. Russian citizens
 - 10.11. International politicians
 - 10.12. Other foreign actors in the conflict
 - 10.13. Other

11. **Main international actors**
 - 11.1. EU politicians
 - 11.2. US politicians
 - 11.3. NATO
 - 11.4. UN
 - 11.5. OSCE
 - 11.6. Red Cross
 - 11.7. WNP/CIS
 - 11.8. Other
12. **How is the dominant actor portrayed?**
 - 12.1. Positively
 - 12.2. Neutral
 - 12.3. Negatively
13. **Secondary actor in the article**
 - 13.1. Polish authorities
 - 13.2. Polish citizens
 - 13.3. Ukrainian authorities
 - 13.4. Ukrainian military
 - 13.5. Ukrainian citizens
 - 13.6. Civilians in the conflict area
 - 13.7. Rebels
 - 13.8. Russian authorities
 - 13.9. Russian military
 - 13.10. Vladimir Putin
 - 13.11. International politicians
 - 13.12. Other foreign actors in the conflict
 - 13.13. Other
14. **Secondary international actors**
 - 14.1. EU politicians
 - 14.2. US politicians
 - 14.3. NATO
 - 14.4. UN
 - 14.5. OSCE
 - 14.6. Red Cross
 - 14.7. CIS
 - 14.8. Other
15. **How is the secondary actor portrayed?**
 - 15.1. Positively
 - 15.2. Neutral
 - 15.3. Negatively

16. **What kind of sources of information are visible in the article?**
 - 16.1. Press agency
 - 16.2. Foreign media
 - 16.3. Journalist in the conflict area
 - 16.4. Social media
 - 16.5. Ukrainian politicians
 - 16.6. Ukrainian military
 - 16.7. Ukrainian citizens
 - 16.8. Russian politicians
 - 16.9. Russian military
 - 16.10. Russian citizens
 - 16.11. Separatists
 - 16.12. Polish politicians
 - 16.13. Polish military
 - 16.14. Polish citizens
 - 16.15. Polish experts
 - 16.16. Russian experts
 - 16.17. Ukrainian experts
 - 16.18. International experts
 - 16.19. EU – politicians
 - 16.20. US – politicians
 - 16.21. NATO
 - 16.22. Civilians in and from conflict area
 - 16.23. Other
17. **Is there any kind of criticism expressed by the journalist towards sources?**
 - 17.1. Yes or no
18. **What kind of criticism is expressed toward sources in the text?**
 - 18.1. Partiality
 - 18.2. Not the complete picture
 - 18.3. False facts
 - 18.4. Other
19. **Is des-information and fake news discussed openly in the article/news story?**
 - 19.1. Yes or no
20. **Is any side accused of des-information/fake news?**
 - 20.1. Russia (politicians + media)
 - 20.2. Russian rebels in conflict area
 - 20.3. Ukraine (politicians + media)

- 20.4. Ukraine (military)
 - 20.5. International pro-western sources
 - 20.6. International pro-Russian sources
 - 20.7. National sources
 - 21. **Was the material related to historical issues/context?**
 - 21.1. Yes
 - 21.2. No
 - 22. **What historical events have been referred to in the material?**
 - 22.1. World War I
 - 22.2. World War II
 - 22.3. Cold War
 - 22.4. Communism
 - 22.5. Transnistrian conflict
 - 22.6. The Russo-Georgian War
 - 22.7. Other (which one?)
 - 23. **To what historical events were the events in Ukraine compared?**
 - 23.1. World War I
 - 23.2. World War II
 - 23.3. Cold War
 - 23.4. Communism
 - 23.5. Transnistrian conflict
 - 23.6. The Russo-Georgian War
 - 23.7. Other (which one?)
 - 24. **Are there any information about historical relations between Poland and parties to the conflict?**
- Comment:** If this type of information appeared it should be written to which events they relate
- 25. **What scenario of the conflict is presented in the material?**
 - 25.1. No scenario
 - 25.2. NATO intervention
 - 25.3. Economic war
 - 25.4. Freezing the conflict
 - 25.5. Increase in military action
 - 25.6. Transition of the conflict beyond Ukraine
 - 25.7. A military threat to Poland
 - 25.8. Other

MH17:

26. **If the story relates to MH17: Is there any claims about responsibility for the downing of the plane:**
- 26.1. Russia-supported rebels was responsible
 - 26.2. Russian military was responsible
 - 26.3. Ukrainian military was responsible
 - 26.4. West was responsible
 - 26.5. It is unclear and not possible to say
 - 26.6. No responsibility discussed
27. **Is the item referring to any proofs for the claim? (yes/no on every option)**
- 27.1. Witnesses/interviews
 - 27.2. Intelligence information
 - 27.3. Social media/blogs
 - 27.4. Technical proofs
 - 27.5. Photos
 - 27.6. Other
28. **How is the investigation described?**
- 28.1. Neutrally
 - 28.2. Rebels helping investigation
 - 28.3. Rebels make difficulties for investigation
 - 28.4. Ukraine helping investigation
 - 28.5. Ukraine make difficulties for investigation

Russian Troops

29. **How is the question of Russian troops in Ukraine described?**
- 29.1. Russian regular troops in Ukraine
 - 29.2. Russian volunteers in Ukraine
 - 29.3. Russian support for rebels
 - 29.4. Unclear situation
 - 29.5. No Russian involvement
 - 29.6. Other
30. **Are there any indications of Russian presence described in the item? (yes/no on every option)**
- 30.1. Witnesses
 - 30.2. Intelligence information
 - 30.3. Social media/blogs
 - 30.4. Technical proofs
 - 30.5. Photos
 - 30.6. Other

Framing

31. How is the conflict described?

- 31.1. Between states
- 31.2. Between the state and non-state actors within the state
- 31.3. Between the state and non-state actors supported by another state
- 31.4. As a civil war
- 31.5. Between the East and West
- 31.6. Other

32. How are the causes of the conflict described?

- 32.1. No causes of the conflict described
- 32.2. Other
- 32.3. Ukrainian nationalism suppressing Russians in Ukraine
- 32.4. Western interference in Ukraine
- 32.5. As a result of divided country (language/culture)
- 32.6. As a result of Russian support for separatists
- 32.7. As a Russian invasion/aggression

33. How is Poland's role in the conflict described?

- 33.1. Defender of Ukraine in the international arena
- 33.2. Side of the war
- 33.3. Victim of the Russians actions (economical and military sanctions)
- 33.4. Victim of the western countries actions
- 33.5. Peacemaker
- 33.6. Neutral observer
- 33.7. No role described
- 33.8. Other

34. Historical and geopolitical context used in the story

- 34.1. Fear of Russian expansion
- 34.2. Fear of lack of NATO reaction
- 34.3. Contemporary Ukrainian struggle for belonging to Europe
- 34.4. Historical struggle for national independence of Ukraine
- 34.5. Struggle for Russian power, values and culture in history
- 34.6. Struggle for Russian power, values and culture today
- 34.7. Struggle against fascism during World War II
- 34.8. War between West and East

35. To what historical entities was Vladimir Putin compared?

Comment: If a comparison appears, then the entity being compared to Vladimir Putin should be determined

Language

36. How were described the events in Ukraine?

- 36.1. War
- 36.2. Conflict
- 36.3. Situation
- 36.4. Civil war
- 36.5. Russian invasion/aggression
- 36.6. Crisis
- 36.7. Protests
- 36.8. Uprising rebellion
- 36.9. Intervention
- 36.10. Revolution
- 36.11. ATO

37. How were described rebels in the conflict area?

- 37.1. Terrorists
- 37.2. Pro-Russian
- 37.3. Rebels
- 37.4. Soldiers
- 37.5. Separatists
- 37.6. People militia
- 37.7. Mercenaries
- 37.8. Militants
- 37.9. Illegal armed groups
- 37.10. Self-defence fighters
- 37.11. Criminals/bandits
- 37.12. Russians
- 37.13. Other

38. How were described Ukrainian army?

- 38.1. Soldiers/army
- 38.2. Volunteers
- 38.3. Heroes
- 38.4. Defenders
- 38.5. Fascists
- 38.6. Punishers
- 38.7. Security forces
- 38.8. Right sector
- 38.9. Combatants
- 38.10. Artillery
- 38.11. Activists

Appendix no. 2: Code book: “Ukraine 2014 – media war and the war in media”

General information

1. CoderID

- 1.1. Write the initial of the coder

2. Unit nr

3. Medium

- 3.1. *Aftonbladet*
- 3.2. *Dagens Nyheter*
- 3.3. SVT-Rapport 19.30
- 3.4. *Komsomolskaja Pravda*
- 3.5. *Kommersant*
- 3.6. Channel 1
- 3.7. *Den*
- 3.8. *Segodnya*
- 3.9. Channel 1+1
- 3.10. *Fakt*
- 3.11. *Gazeta Wyborcza*
- 3.12. Wiadomości TVP

Comment: Each value is only the last figure – *Aftonbladet*=1, *Dagens Nyheter*=2, etc The same is for all values in this code scheme – **don’t write the first figure in the coding. Not 3.15 – write only 15. This is the same for all coding on every variable!**

4. Date

- 4.1. July 10
- 4.2. July 11
- 4.3. July 12
- 4.4. July 13
- 4.5. July 14
- 4.6. July 15
- 4.7. July 16
- 4.8. July 17
- 4.9. July 18
- 4.10. July 19
- 4.11. July 20
- 4.12. July 21

- 4.13. July 22
- 4.14. July 23
- 4.15. July 24
- 4.16. July 25
- 4.17. July 26
- 4.18. July 27
- 4.19. July 28
- 4.20. July 29
- 4.21. July 30
- 4.22. July 31
- 4.23. Aug 1
- 4.24. Aug 2
- 4.25. Aug 3
- 4.26. Aug 4
- 4.27. Aug 5
- 4.28. Aug 6
- 4.29. Aug 7
- 4.30. Aug 8
- 4.31. Aug 9
- 4.32. Aug 10
- 4.33. Aug 11
- 4.34. Aug 12
- 4.35. Aug 13
- 4.36. Aug 14
- 4.37. Aug 15
- 4.38. Aug 16
- 4.39. Aug 17
- 4.40. Aug 18
- 4.41. Aug 19
- 4.42. Aug 20
- 4.43. Aug 21
- 4.44. Aug 22
- 4.45. Aug 23
- 4.46. Aug 24
- 4.47. Aug 25
- 4.48. Aug 26
- 4.49. Aug 27
- 4.50. Aug 28
- 4.51. Aug 29

- 4.52. Aug 30
- 4.53. Aug 31
- 4.54. Sept 1
- 4.55. Sept 2
- 4.56. Sept 3
- 4.57. Sept 4
- 4.58. Sept 5
- 4.59. Sept 6
- 4.60. Sept 7
- 5. **Title – headline – lead intro (in TV) (One sentence)**
- 6. **Place**
 - 6.1. Front page/ first news in television
 - 6.2. Inside – biggest story the page/second-third news
 - 6.3. Inside – minor on the page/from 4th item in TV
- 7. **Space – papers (tabloid format)**
 - 7.1. Full page
 - 7.2. Half page
 - 7.3. Quarter of a page
 - 7.4. Less than quarter
- 8. **Space – papers (broadsheet format)**
 - 8.1. Full page
 - 8.2. Half page
 - 8.3. Quarter of a page
 - 8.4. Less than quarter
- 9. **Time (in TV)**
Comment: Time should be given in seconds only. This makes it easier to export and import between SPSS and Excel.
- 10. **Genre – in newspapers**
 - 10.1. News report
 - 10.2. Background/analysis
 - 10.3. Feature reporting
 - 10.4. Interview
 - 10.5. Column (related to news)
 - 10.6. Vox pop
 - 10.7. Quote (not related to any other article)

Comment: Column is in the selected material when it is placed in the news section. Content analysis:

11. General theme of the story (in headline and introduction)

- 11.1. International political discussion and sanctions
- 11.2. National political discussion a sanctions
- 11.3. Actions involving weapons in the conflict area
- 11.4. Consequences for civilians in the conflict area (refugees or staying)
- 11.5. Pro-Russian rebels and their actions
- 11.6. Russian involvement in conflict area (support in general)
- 11.7. Russian military involvement in the conflict area
- 11.8. Military support for Ukraine
- 11.9. Popular support for one side
- 11.10. Popular support for civilians
- 11.11. Consequences of the conflict sanctions and economy
- 11.12. Other consequences of the conflict
- 11.13. Negotiations Ukraine-separatists-Russia
- 11.14. Stories on Ukrainian military (not military actions)
- 11.15. Stories on separatists (not military actions)
- 11.16. MH 17
- 11.17. Russian humanitarian convoy (trucks)
- 11.18. Other

12. Main perspective on the article (in headline and introduction)

- 12.1. Support for the Ukrainian government
- 12.2. Support for Ukrainian military
- 12.3. Support for the civilians in conflict area
- 12.4. Support for Russian government
- 12.5. Support for separatists
- 12.6. Neutral – popular perspective
- 12.7. Neutral – power perspective
- 12.8. Support for Ukrainians in general
- 12.9. Neutral – no special perspective

Comment: This variable shall be coded on the basis of the general impression in headline, lead and choice of pictures. Articles criticizing one side shall be regarded to be supportive of the opposite perspective, For example - an article putting responsibility for the conflict on Kremlin and Putin, is supporting the Ukrainian perspective.

In many cases it is difficult to separate between the values in the variable, for example support for rebels or support for Russia. In these cases choose the most likely. In the analysis we perhaps have to reduce the number of values in the variable, for example calculate all support for Russian perspective in one category (because it is difficult to judge what value is correct)

13. **Dominant actor in the article/news story**

- 13.1. Ukrainian political actors
- 13.2. Ukrainian authorities/officials
- 13.3. Ukrainian military
- 13.4. Ukrainian civil society and organisations
- 13.5. Civilians in conflict area
- 13.6. Rebels in conflict area
- 13.7. Russian military
- 13.8. Political actors in Russia
- 13.9. Russian civil society
- 13.10. International politicians
- 13.11. Other foreign actors in the conflict
- 13.12. Civil society in other countries
- 13.13. Other

Comment: What is actor? A broader notion than source –it is a person or a group of persons described and/or taken as a source. The dominant actor is the one taking most place, dominating the lead and pictures.

14. **Main international actors**

- 14.1. EU-politicians
- 14.2. US-politicians
- 14.3. BRIC-politicians
- 14.4. International organisations (US, OSCE, Red Cross etc)
- 14.5. NATO
- 14.6. CIS
- 14.7. Other

15. **How is the dominant actor portrayed?**

- 15.1. Positively
- 15.2. Neutral
- 15.3. Negatively
- 15.4. Not possible to say

Comment: Positively or negatively for the actor. In headline and introduction. This variable concern *both* the event described and how it is described. Is it positive/negative for the dominant actor that this news is published, and is it produced in a way positive or negative for the actor?

16. **Second actor in the article/news story**

- 16.1. Ukrainian political actors
- 16.2. Ukrainian authorities/officials
- 16.3. Ukrainian military
- 16.4. Ukrainian civil society and organisations

- 16.5. Civilians in conflict area
- 16.6. Rebels in conflict area
- 16.7. Russian military
- 16.8. Political actors in Russia
- 16.9. Russian civil society
- 16.10. International politicians
- 16.11. Other foreign actors in the conflict
- 16.12. Civil society in other countries
- 16.13. Other

Comment: The second actor is clearly visible but not as much as the dominant one. Not all news stories have a second actor. In that case these variables are left empty

17. How is the second actor portrayed?

- 17.1. Positively
- 17.2. Neutral
- 17.3. Negatively
- 17.4. Not possible to say

Comment: Positively or negatively for the actor. In headline and introduction

Sources and des-information

18. Is the journalist behind the story on place in? (if many, the first mentioned)

- 18.1. Kiev
- 18.2. Other places in Ukraine (except Donbass)
- 18.3. Conflict area
- 18.4. Crimea
- 18.5. Moscow
- 18.6. Other places in Russia
- 18.7. Poland
- 18.8. Sweden
- 18.9. Norway
- 18.10. Other EU-countries
- 18.11. Other CIS-countries
- 18.12. Other
- 18.13. Not possible to answer

19. Is the story referring to news agencies? (in case of many, give the first mentioned):

- 19.1. No references to news agencies
- 19.2. Reuters

- 19.3. AP
- 19.4. AFP
- 19.5. DPA
- 19.6. PAP
- 19.7. Russian news agencies (RIA Novosti, Interfax etc)
- 19.8. Ukrainian news agencies
- 19.9. NTB
- 19.10. TT
- 19.11. Other
- 20. **Is the story referring to other media?**
 - 20.1. Ukrainian national media
 - 20.2. Kyiv Post (English)
 - 20.3. Russian national media
 - 20.4. Russia Today
 - 20.5. BBC
 - 20.6. CNN
 - 20.7. Other satellite TV-channels
 - 20.8. Other European media
 - 20.9. Other US media
 - 20.10. Other
- Comment:** If more than one media is mentioned, choose the one given the largest space in the item. If no other media is mentioned, leave it blank.
- 21. **Is social media or blogs mentioned as a source?**
 - 21.1. No
 - 21.2. Yes – Facebook
 - 21.3. Yes – Twitter
 - 21.4. Yes – blogs
 - 21.5. Yes – V Kontakte
 - 21.6. Yes - other
- 22. **What kind of sources are visible in the article (yes/no on every option)**
 - 22.1. Ukrainian government
 - 22.2. Other Ukrainian political actors
 - 22.3. Ukrainian experts
 - 22.4. Ukrainian military
 - 22.5. Ukrainian civil society
 - 22.6. Ukrainian civilians in general (outside conflict area)
 - 22.7. Civilians in and from conflict area
 - 22.8. Russian politicians (connected to government)
 - 22.9. Russian opposition

- 22.10. Russian experts
- 22.11. Russian rebels in conflict area
- 22.12. Russian military
- 22.13. Journalists/media in the conflict area
- 22.14. International experts (UN, OSSE, NGOs etc.)
- 22.15. EU-politicians
- 22.16. Politicians connected to US
- 22.17. NATO-officials
- 22.18. People outside Ukraine/Russia
- 22.19. Other

Comment: A source is any person/institution mentioned in the item as a source, even if he/she is not quoted.

23. Is any kind of criticism expressed by the journalist towards sources (reliability, disinformation etc)

- 23.1. (yes/no)

Comment: If yes, specify in question 28 what kind of actor is accused of disinformation.

24. What kind of criticism is expressed towards the sources in the text:

- 24.1. Partiality
- 24.2. Not the complete picture
- 24.3. False facts
- 24.4. Other

25. Is des-information and fake news discussed openly in the article/news story?

- 25.1. Yes/no

26. Is any side accused of des-information/fake news?

- 26.1. Russia (politicians + media)
- 26.2. Russian rebels in conflict area
- 26.3. Ukraine (politicians + media)
- 26.4. Ukraine (military)
- 26.5. International pro-western sources
- 26.6. International pro-Russian sources

MH17

27. If the story relates to MH17: Is there any claims about responsibility for the downing of the plane:

- 27.1. Russia-supported rebels was responsible
- 27.2. Russian military was responsible

- 27.3. Ukrainian military was responsible
- 27.4. West was responsible
- 27.5. It is unclear and not possible to say
- 27.6. No responsibility discussed

Comment: Generally for all variables - the coding is to be done based on the general impression in headline, lead, pictures and text. For example - responsibility for MH17 is evaluated from what facts are given most attention and visibility?

- 28. **Is the item referring to any proofs for the claim? (yes/no on every option)**
 - 28.1. Witnesses/interviews
 - 28.2. Intelligence information
 - 28.3. Social media/blogs
 - 28.4. Technical proofs
 - 28.5. Photos
 - 28.6. Other
- 29. **How is the investigation described?**
 - 29.1. Neutrally
 - 29.2. Rebels helping investigation
 - 29.3. Rebels make difficulties for investigation
 - 29.4. Ukraine helping investigation
 - 29.5. Ukraine make difficulties for investigation

Russian Troops

- 30. **How is the question of Russian troops in Ukraine described?**
 - 30.1. Russian regular troops in Ukraine
 - 30.2. Russian volunteers in Ukraine
 - 30.3. Russian support for rebels
 - 30.4. Unclear situation
 - 30.5. No Russian involvement
 - 30.6. Other
- 31. **Are there any indications of Russian presence described in the item? (yes/no on every option)**
 - 31.1. Witnesses
 - 31.2. Intelligence information
 - 31.3. Social media/blogs
 - 31.4. Technical proofs
 - 31.5. Photos
 - 31.6. Other

Framing

32. **How is the conflict described? As a conflict...**
 - 32.1. between states
 - 32.2. between the state and nonstate actors within the state
 - 32.3. between the state and nonstate actors supported by another state
 - 32.4. As a civil war
 - 32.5. Other
33. **How are the causes of the conflict described (yes/no on all options)**
 - 33.1. Ukrainian nationalism suppressing Russians in Ukraine
 - 33.2. Western interference in Ukraine
 - 33.3. As a result of a divided country (language/culture)
 - 33.4. As a result of Russian support for separatists
 - 33.5. As a Russian invasion/Russian aggression
 - 33.6. Other causes
 - 33.7. No causes described

Comment: The causes are defined as the origins of the conflict, how it started.

34. **Historical and geopolitical context used in the story (yes and no on every option)**
 - 34.1. Historical struggle for national independence of Ukraine
 - 34.2. Contemporary Ukrainian struggle for belonging to Europe
 - 34.3. Struggle against fascism during Second World War
 - 34.4. Struggle for Russian power, values and culture in history
 - 34.5. Struggle for Russian power, values and culture today
 - 34.6. Fear for Russian expansion
 - 34.7. Fear of Nato expansion

Comment: Here we code the manifest content of the item, references made to these areas in the story.

Language

35. **Is any kind of these word used to describe the events in Eastern Ukraine? (yes/no on every option)**
 - 35.1. Protests
 - 35.2. Terrorist actions
 - 35.3. Anti-terrorist operation (ATO)
 - 35.4. Punitive operation
 - 35.5. Situation
 - 35.6. Conflict
 - 35.7. Civil war

- 35.8. Russian invasion/aggression
- 35.9. War
- 35.10. Crisis
- 35.11. Uprising, rebellion
- 36. **What kind of words describe the rebels in the conflict area? (yes/no on every option)**
 - 36.1. Terrorists
 - 36.2. Pro-Russian
 - 36.3. Rebels
 - 36.4. Soldiers
 - 36.5. Separatists
 - 36.6. People militia
 - 36.7. Mercenaries
 - 36.8. Militants
 - 36.9. Illegal armed groups
 - 36.10. Self-defence fighters
 - 36.11. Criminals/bandits
 - 36.12. Russians
 - 36.13. Other
- 37. **What notions are used to describe the Ukrainian side in the conflict (yes/no on every option)**
 - 37.1. Soldiers/army
 - 37.2. Volunteers
 - 37.3. Heroes
 - 37.4. Defenders
 - 37.5. Fascists/Nazis/neo-Nazis
 - 37.6. Punishers
 - 37.7. Security forces
 - 37.8. Right sector/Azov battalion
 - 37.9. Combatants
 - 37.10. Artillery
 - 37.11. Activists

Comment: If more than one of these words are used, give the most frequent description.

Appendix no. 3: In-depth interviews

The following areas should be covered in the interviews. The exact questions is formulated by the researcher.

- Personal data – age, experience as a journalist – especially as foreign and war correspondent
- Background knowledge about the conflict?
- What parts of the conflict has IP covered?
- Experiences from coverage – for example conditions of the work, time pressure and rules from military limiting reporting?
- Security and threat during the work?
- Character of the conflict – for example the influence of the conflict's hybridity on the coverage, differences between covering this conflict and other military events
- Ethical dilemmas
- Source criticism/disinformation/fake news? – how did the journalists deal with it?
- Role of the journalist – to be a neutral observer or an activist taking stand supporting one side? Where are the borders between different roles? What is possible for IP to do?
- History and inter-state relations – the influence of these factors on the coverage and the relations with parties to the conflict
- Domestication – how did the journalists try to bring this conflict closer to the audience?
- Autonomy in the work – pressure from above (owners, political influence, editors, etc.)
- Autonomy – pressure from audience and society? – for example the influence of national stereotypes and prejudices on the coverage
- Other questions?

Appendix no. 4: In-depth interviews: “Ukraine 2014 – media war and the war in media”

The following areas should be covered in the interviews. The exact questions is formulated by the researcher.

- Personal data – age, experience as a journalist
- Background knowledge about the conflict?
- What parts of the conflict has IP covered?
- Experiences from coverage – for example conditions of the work, time pressure and rules from military limiting reporting?
- Security and threat during the work?
- Ethical dilemmas

- Source criticism/disinformation/fake news?
- Role of the journalist – to be a neutral observer or an activist taking stand supporting one side? Where are the borders between different roles? What is possible for IP to do?
- Autonomy in the work – pressure from above (owners, political influence, editors etc.)
- Autonomy – pressure from audience and society?
- Other questions?

Appendix no. 5: List of respondents

Code	Sex	Age	Media outlet	Function/role
R1	M	35–50	<i>Fakt</i>	journalist/editor
R2	M	35<	<i>Fakt</i>	journalist/editor
R3	M	35–50	<i>Super Express</i>	journalist/editor
R4	M	35–55	<i>Gazeta Wyborcza</i>	journalist/opinion writer
R5	M	35–55	<i>Gazeta Wyborcza</i>	correspondent/opinion writer
R6	M	55	<i>Rzeczpospolita</i>	journalist/opinion writer
R7	M	35<	<i>Rzeczpospolita/Super Express</i>	journalist/commentator
R8	M	35–50	Fakty TVN	reporter/editor
R9	W	35–55	Wiadomości TVP1	reporter/editor
R10	M	35–50	Wiadomości TVP1	reporter/editor
R11	M	35–50	Interia.pl	journalist/editor

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